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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, OF

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

Published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1920.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.:

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Barr Ferree, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the publisher of

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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Publisher Barr Ferree,
249 West 13th St., New York.
Editor—George William Blackwood,
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Managing Editor—None.
Business Manager—Barr Ferree,
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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

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ARABIAN NIGHTS AND DAYS.

BY W.

IN all the wonderful British Saga of exploit by land and sea and air that 'Blackwood's' has collected these last five years with an almost uncanny instinct for what would be read and reread, not only at home, but in countless well-worn copies in trench, swamp, desert, and bunk on every land and sea front, there has been no account of one of the most Elizabethan of all the great and small adventures of the War—the fight with the Arabs against the Turks. Nor is this peculiar, for, so far as I know, no authoritative or first-hand account has yet appeared of that enterprise, save that contained in official despatches, supplemented by a series of articles in a London newspaper, which only supplied the outline and chronology of the campaign, and, of course, Mr Lowell Thomas's lecture and subsequent magazine article. The latter, however, does not claim a greater personal knowledge of the campaign than that afforded to him, as a special correspondent, by a visit, and he was not in fact with the Arab forces at all, as he is careful to explain in his brilliant lecture, in the last stage of the campaign of which I am about to write.

This stage, though less picturesque than some of Colonel Lawrence's single-handed exploits in 1916-17, was, from a military point of view, the most important of all, and ending, as it did, in a smashing blow at the Turks' life-line of communications, materially contributed to the completeness of Lord Allenby's 18-19th September, 1918, attack.

That I am able, however unworthy my pen, to give an account of what occurred, based on diaries kept at the time, is due to the fact that

I had less responsibility than any of the British personnel with the Northern Arab Army, and consequently more time for seeing and noting the amazing sequence of events.

Going sick at the end of 1917, just at the close of Allenby's first great offensive, I left the land of Canaan, after eight strenuous months' campaigning, for the command of a depot near Cairo. There I spent the first three months of 1918, and, after a period of leave in England, returned to take up a similar post at Ismailia, where my duties, in addition to commanding a certain unit, included, for reasons as obscure to me then as they are now, the post of acting as Port Admiral. This comic-opera combination of military and maritime duties would in itself have made life delightful at Ismailia; but also there was fishing, bathing, the pursuit of foxes, sometimes with hounds, but more often, I blush to confess, with broken polo-sticks and lances, and two days a week polo, in which no less a person than the redoubtable author of the 'Geebung Polo Club' took part, most appropriately, considering the nature of the game and of the ponies at Ismailia.

All this was pleasant enough, but it was not the War, however much the gentlemen who began, continued, and ended the campaign in Cairo, varying it by a short excursion on somebody's staff to Mudros or Tenedos during Gallipoli days, may have thought it was. The brilliant author of 'Eastern Nights and Flights' has hinted at the queer mentality of these particular *embusqués*, who made Egypt a byword during the War, and have, unhappily, to some extent given the impression at home that soldiering in the M.E.F. or E.E.F. was a soft job—the true facts being that real soldiering in either force, even in the days after Gallipoli and before the advance, was as hard as it was anywhere, except in France, whilst unreal soldiering was more disgraceful than it was anywhere, even in England.

Having always had a peculiar dread of being confounded with these gentry, I grasped eagerly at the chance, which occurred in July 1918, of being detached for two months from my battalion for service under "Hedjaz operations" in Arabia, and about the middle of August I embarked at Suez on a trawler for Akaba. The trawler, which was one of the regular "transports" between Suez and Akaba, provided neither eating, sleeping, nor cabin accommodation for its passengers on their forty-eight hours' journey. One took one's rations with him, and if one was an officer, one's servant cooked them at the crew's stove. Other ranks managed somehow, and officers and men spread their blankets and kit at night on deck anywhere where there was room to stretch out. On this particular boat, which was about the size of a Thames launch, there were two British officers, about eight British other ranks, and thirty Gurkhas in addition to freight and crew, and it was

the Red Sea in August. Notwithstanding, every one appeared quite cheerful and by no means uncomfortable, though what would have happened had any one been seized with sudden illness, such as appendicitis or dysentery, in view of the fact that the ship was innocent of doctor, medical orderly, or drugs, I do not know. Apart from the pleasurable anticipation of seeing the Arab movement in being, the reason why I was cheerful—and I fancy it applied to the others also—was that, for the first time since the war, I was on a ship and a sea where one could show lights all night on deck if one wished, eat when one liked, and sleep when one liked, and where there were no ships' orders, no life-belts to wear, no alarm parades, and practically no danger, since mines and submarines were alike unknown in the Red Sea, or at any rate in that part of it.

The conditions on that trawler epitomised the whole contrast of life as a soldier in Arabia with that prevailing on every other front where there were British troops. Of the elaborate safeguards for the physical, mental, and moral welfare of the British soldier that existed elsewhere, there were few, if any. No chaplain in all the country, only two or three doctors, but two "hospitals," and they in each case comprised in a single tent; no Y.M.C.A. (indeed, we never mentioned the word "Christian" in Arabia, and even our hospital tent and equipment did not bear the emblem of the Cross, so hateful to Moslems), and no ambulance waggon. But if the few score officers and men—British, Indian, and Egyptian, who were attached to the Arab forces—were without the value of these different aids to this world and the next, they enjoyed the advantage of being without a single General or Staff officer in the ordinary sense of the word, or A.P.M or military policeman, and of never having to do guards or bother about Army, Corps, Division, or Brigade Orders, since, as Bagehot said of the British Constitution, "il n'existe point."

To me, at any rate, with memories of Cape Helles as an infantry soldier, and who had, during the war, more than one experience of service in a unit within the command of the old picture-postcard, red-faced, white-haired type of General, eternally considering ways and means for bringing the modern amateur soldier, officer, and man (whom that particular type of old-army General hated and despised) up or down (according to how you regard it) to the level of Meerut in '95 or Chatham in '90, Arabia was gloriously suggestive of playing truant from school, or breaking every rule at bridge without reproof. Indeed, it was the wonderful schoolboy sense of fighting, as man, the human animal, should fight, untrammelled by the rules and regulations of his seniors who do not fight, in great open spaces, sometimes close to his enemy, but always with the desert

around for thought and breathing space, under leaders whose very names were legendary, almost in far-off England, for skill and daring, which appealed to all of us, officers and men, who did the humbler jobs in Arabia.

Think, O reader, who know only France or Mesopotamia or Salonika, of a force, all of whose men were combatants, all of whose component parts were under fire at some time or other, at whose only base (Akaba) the handful of officers were not only in almost hourly danger owing to the frolicsome habit of the local natives in firing off their rifles at any handy object, which was often a British tent, but who themselves would go off on mysterious and often perilous "stunts" for two or three days at a time into the neighbouring country, which, though nominally friendly to Prince Feisul and his allies, honoured that friendship frequently more in the breach than the observance. Think what a sense of irritation it saves one, when coming back on leave, to find no line of communications or administrative services with supercilious and superior Staff officers, and fat, not over-polite N.C.O.'s, who one knew had never done and would never do an honest day's soldiering under fire if they could help it. Moreover, one felt all the time that the Arab army were true partners in a game of honourable and real adventure. Prince Feisul, for example, was the true type of "Gentleman Adventurer" of old. As for Drake or Raleigh, so for Prince Feisul or General Nuri Said, or any of the other leaders, capture would certainly have meant death, and probably torture as well, for they were titular and actual rebels. When I read of Prince Feisul being described by his detractors in the European press, at the time of the Paris Conference, as an "adventurer," I thought that, intended in disparagement, no term better fitted the Prince, for no man of that company of delegates adventured more of his personal safety for patriotic reasons from 1914 to 1918 than Prince Feisul. His share in smashing empires was taken not in White Houses or War Cabinets, but in the field, where his personal courage, high birth, and boundless sense of duty rallied thousands of Arabs to the cause of smashing the Turkish Empire.

Arrived at Akaba, my servant and I, having donned the kefia, or Arab turban, which all British personnel wore, proceeded in a Ford car for Abu Lisal, the headquarters of the Northern Arab Army. The position at that time, the middle of August 1918, in Arabia was broadly this: a Turkish Corps was besieged in Medina, and did not in effect surrender until after the Armistice. From this place northwards the Hedjaz railway was hopelessly smashed by successive Arab raids and demolition parties as far as Maan. There had been during the summer a few isolated Turkish posts on this portion of the line, but the last of them, Mudawara, had

fallen early in August after an attack by a detachment of the Imperial Camel Corps specially lent to the Arab forces by Lord Allenby for the purpose. The fact that British troops, mounted on camels, could suddenly appear in Arabia in this fashion, having marched overland across the Sinai Desert and hills, was an unpleasant surprise for the Turks, since it indirectly menaced their Palestine line (facing General Allenby), which extended in a continuous trench line from the sea to the Jordan, and thence by a patrol, strong-point, and outpost line to Es Salt and Ammon, in the land of Moab, which, it will be remembered, Lord Allenby had failed to take in the spring of 1918, and where there was a Turkish Division or more. Beyond Es Salt and Ammon eastwards there was no protection for the Turks except a few posts on the Hedjaz railway, and the natural protection of the desert, which stretches right away to Mesopotamia. The Turks, probably, knew accurately enough the strength of the small Arab regular army in and around Abu Lisal, which was mainly engaged in investing Maan, whose Turkish garrison declined to surrender, although communication between it and Ammon, by means of the Hedjaz railway, had, owing to constant raids, virtually ceased. They knew that the Arab army did not possess sufficient rifles, guns, or aeroplanes (there was a small British Flying detachment near Akaba) to attempt to turn the Turkish left flank by attacking Ammon, and they never dreamt that it would be used, as this narrative will show it was subsequently used, to attack the Turkish line of communications yet farther north behind Ammon; and no doubt they also knew that the handful of British armoured cars, Gurkhas, French Colonial gunners, and Egyptian Camel Corps with the Arabs at Abu Lisal and Akaba had all to be brought by sea from Egypt to Akaba, and then maintained over difficult roads, with a transport organisation which, though as efficient as it could be under the circumstances, fell deplorably short of requirements in animals, for the reason that they could not be obtained. But the arrival of an Imperial Camel Corps Column of seasoned British troops overland from the Suez Canal, whence the column started, should have warned them of the possible dangers to their left flank, if such a column was to attack Es Salt and Ammon from the desert side simultaneously with an attack by Allenby's Cavalry Corps (always a source of dread to the Turks, whose own cavalry was deplorable) from the Jordan side. Yet they took no precautions as a result of Mudawara, though it must have been apparent that not only Ammon and Es Salt, but the whole east flank of their Palestine army, were in danger.

On the Hedjaz railway south of Damascus was a town and station, Deraa, where was a

Turkish supply depot and an aerodrome. From Deraa a Turkish war-built railway branched westward to Nablus to feed the Turkish-Palestine line, and southwards the Hedjaz railway stretched away to Ammon, Maan, Medina, and Mecca.

When I arrived at Prince Feisul's headquarters at Abu Lisal, all preparations were well forward for a scheme worked out between Allenby's General Staff, the British advisers to the Arabs, both in Arabia and Cairo, Prince Feisul, and the latter's Generals. This was no less a plan than to send from Abu Lisal a column of Arab troops on camels, plus a small detachment of French Colonial gunners, some British armoured cars, and a handful of Egyptian Camel Corps and Gurkhas, to do the demolition work, round eastward of the Hedjaz railway to cut the railway north, south, and west (on the Nablus branch) of Deraa. The distance to be traversed was nearly 400 miles, mostly over desert, and the march would necessarily have to be made without communications. The effect of the enterprise would be that, if it was timed a day or two before Allenby's projected offensive on the 18-19th September, and was successful—

1. The Turkish supply line to both Ammon and the rest of the Palestine front would be broken, at any rate temporarily.

2. No reinforcements would be able to reach Palestine from Damascus and Asia Minor.

3. If General Allenby's attack were successful, this triple break of the railway would greatly hamper the Turks' movement on retirement, and might even cut them off, though I don't think it was ever contemplated by the Staff with Allenby that the Arabs would be able to do more than interrupt communications for forty-eight hours, the Turks being fairly quick at repairing their lines.

4. Lastly, though less important, it might divert a Turkish Division from the already thinly held Turkish Palestine line to Deraa (before Allenby's attack) from a fear that the raid would be repeated in greater force, backed by a general rising of the Ruweilah tribesmen, all mounted and armed, and the peasants of the Hauran.

It is necessary here to point out that the local Arabs were somewhat divided in their sympathies. The majority supported Prince Feisul and the Sultan Hussein, King of Mecca and the Arabs, whose representative he was, and probably 99 per cent supported him in their hearts. But those Arabs who lived near what may be called the Turkish sphere of influence, as apart from the country constantly raided by the Arabs, or where the Turkish posts had ceased to exist, naturally had to consider their interests. Even they helped the Arab movement in many ways, and from most tribes we received considerable assistance, with the dishonourable exception of

some of the Druses and certain of the Haurani peasants, who were "Mr Facing-both-ways" with a vengeance, equally ready to stab either side in the back. By the Arab army, often here mentioned, I refer to Feisul's regular army of Syrians and Mesopotamians, equipped with British kit, save for their kefias, and arms, all of whom at one time or other had served as unwilling conscripts in the Turkish army, and deserted, or been taken prisoners by British or Arabs. Service was entirely voluntary, and officers and men could resign their military duties at any time. The discipline in consequence was not very strong, but the *esprit de corps* was considerable, and the courage and endurance of all ranks on the march or in action was really remarkable. The regular army, which only numbered a few thousand men, had a variety of guns, about fifty in all, of every make and country of origin—Austrian Skodas, French 75's, German and Turkish pieces, but had the valuable backing of a homogeneous French Colonial mountain battery. Of aeroplanes there were none, except the afore-mentioned British detachment; whilst the cavalry, so-called, were just local Arab irregulars who joined in the proceedings sometimes for a few hours, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for a few weeks. There were no specially trained engineers, since most men in the force, even the most ignorant peasant Arab soldier, had learnt something of demolitions and explosives in their frequent raids on the railway. Also, the Egyptian Camel Corps company had, at the period of which I write, been well trained in a special form of demolition; and in order that they might do their work in comparative peace of mind (the Egyptian, *pace* Nationalist references to "a brave and independent race," being not naturally a fighter), they had a "stiffening" of some thirty Gurkhas, with Lewis guns, who invariably accompanied them and watched for Turks whilst they blew up rails and bridges. Finally, there were the British light- and armoured-car detachments. For reasons somewhat obscurely connected with high political considerations, very little mention has been made officially of their work; but now that the most has been made that could be of the false statement that the Arab movement was created by us for our own purpose, surely full testimony should be paid to the gallant work of the British officers and men, about sixty in all, who worked the armoured cars and drove the light cars in Arabia. Apart from the numberless times that they were in action, often in places where no medical succour could possibly reach them if they were wounded, and where, indeed, a stomach wound, for example, meant that Kipling's advice had better at once be taken—

> "Roll to your rifle and blow out your brains,
> And go to your God, like a soldier,"

they had imposed on them at

all times the tremendous strain of driving over roadless country under a pitiless sun, often on a minimum allowance of water, and doing it day after day for twelve or fourteen hours a day. That they did it, and vied in endurance with the Arabs themselves—in itself no mean feat—is only to say that they were British soldiers.

I have already said that when I reached Abu Lisal, on 20th August, plans were well forward for the great raid on Deraa. This did not mean that the raid would necessarily mature, for there are many slips between the cup and the lip in Arabia, and time and dates are ever vague terms in the desert. The discussions between the British advisers and the Arab leaders were also somewhat seriously affected by an unfortunate difference of opinion, the arguments on both sides being conducted over the wireless between Prince Feisul and his father, the King. This difference of opinion had no reference to the great raid, but had a bearing on it, as Prince Feisul resigned his post as Generalissimo of the Northern Arab forces as a result of his father's strictures. The fat was then fairly in the fire: Prince Feisul's half-brother Zeid also wired to his father resigning his post with our force; whilst the Arab troops, whose ideas of discipline differed considerably from that, for example, of the Guards Division, took sides in the controversy, demonstrating in favour of Prince Feisul. However, L. and S. at last smoothed everything down. Feisul withdrew his resignation, and Y., one of the most indefatigable of all our little band of British officers, obtained, in conjunction with the Arab supply officers, sufficient camels and drivers to make up a hamla, or supply train, to Azrak—an oasis east of the line, where was to be the advance dump of the column.

Finally, on 30th August, in accordance with the original scheme, the hamla was ready, and started on its long march, and a few days later, L., Sherif Nasser, a relative of Prince Feisul, accompanied by two of his slaves, H., an Egyptian officer of rare capacity and considerable charm, and I, started out for Azrak in a Ford car and a Rolls-Royce tender or box-car. With us went a few worldly belongings, rations for ten days, driver and spare driver for each car, and H.'s Egyptian servant (neither L. nor I had a servant, L. never, characteristically, having possessed one, and my soldier-servant being sick), which made a fair load for two cars over the roadless desert, especially as we carried stacks of petrol and spare tyres galore. We did the 200 odd miles in a day and a quarter, reaching Azrak at 3 P.M. on the 7th. Azrak, which is distant some 40 or 50 miles eastward of Ammon, and about 80 miles from Deraa, is an oasis in the true sense of the word; and proceeding eastward again from it one would not leave the desert until one reached Mesopotamia, I suppose. It used

to amuse me to gaze towards the east at Azrak and speculate on what our comrades in Mesopotamia were doing, and if we should ever join forces with them. Azrak, which is a natural collecting-place for the drainage of the surrounding desert, here mainly shingle and flinty ground with little soft sand, contains two or three square miles of mud flats, full of high tamarisk, with occasional clumps of palms, and bulrushes around pools of pellucid water, the origin of which comes apparently from underground springs. Above the largest pool, on a low ridge of lava rock, there are the ruins of a very charming and graceful castle, partly built by the Arabs some 1400 years ago, on the site of an earlier Roman building, some of whose stones and pillars, variously inscribed, are incorporated in the present building.

After 200 grilling miles across the desert plains, Azrak looked a haven indeed from afar, but we were soon to learn otherwise. At Azrak we found a R.A.F. officer and some mechanics, all Australians, who had arrived in a car the previous day to await the arrival of two of the 'planes from Akaba, which were to be stabled here. They informed us there were flies there—"some flies, too." They were indeed "some flies"—huge, white, venomous camel-flies; their sting was almost like that of a wasp. At dusk they went to roost, but at the same time a heavy desert wind got up with a steady London fog-like dust, which rendered the eating of a good plate of Maconachie, prepared by H.'s servant, almost impossible. As we had no shelter, the cars having returned, the only thing to do was to roll up in one's blanket and cover one's head. About midnight the wind ceased, to be replaced by a cloud of mosquitoes from the swamp—altogether a most unpleasant night, reminiscent of the worst I have ever spent in war or after big game.

Next morning L. and I, having helped the Anzac flying-men to erect their canvas hangar, and having nothing else to do until the arrival of the 'planes or the hamla, spent the morning bathing, much tormented by the flies, and the afternoon in the cool, quiet, and blessed freedom from flies of the castle. I spoke just now of the "ruins" of the castle of Azrak, but in truth part of it might have been built yesterday, and not 1400 years ago. Without a bit of wood in it, even the rafters and doors are of stone. There is a small disused mosque in the centre of the courtyard, around which are grouped the living-rooms or guard-rooms, whilst there are plentiful Arabic inscriptions, and one rather pathetic broken altar, stating in Greek and Latin that a certain legion had occupied the fort and worshipped the emperor there. Here, much more vividly than in France or England or Italy, one realises the tragic break-

down of a great empire and a great system. In those countries, other great empires and systems have arisen on the ruin of the Roman Empire. Here, but for the brief Arab Empire, there has been nothing but stagnation and decay since the Romans left. All round this part of Arabia are extensive signs of the Roman occupation—forts, the tracings of roads with the foundation-stones still remaining, and evidences of a system of cultivation and enclosure far superior to anything of to-day.

This castle of Azrak was once the property of an Arab prince, so L. informed me, famous for his love of hunting and pack of hunting-dogs, probably the local Selugi Greyhounds, who hunt by sight only, and there is a local tradition that their spirits howl round the castle at nights. I must confess that I never heard them, though it would have been most appropriate that I, who happen to be what the Arabs would call "a keeper of hunting-dogs," on another continent, should have heard these spirit-hounds acclaiming the haunts of their earthly existence.

It was a rather unusually hot afternoon on the day in question, and I, as I lay on some freshly-cut palm boughs in one corner of one of the great, cool, stone rooms of the castle, L. stretched out in another corner reading a book, could not help thinking what romance clung to these walls. What scenes of love and hate, passion and jealousy, splendour, revelry, misery, decay, must they have seen in their long years of existence. Outside, the palm-trees rustled continuously, with a soothing iteration very pleasant after the two previous days' ten hours of fierce sunshine in a treeless desert; and under one of them, reclining at full length on his carpet, spread out for him, lay Sherif Nasser, his two grizzled, old, black slaves (the negro slaves of a well-born Arab are in much the same privileged position as were those of a Virginian county family before the Civil War) at his feet, all three attired in costly silk robes and kefias and aggales (the band that secures the kefia or turban) of brilliant but well-matched colour, and each with a heavily-ornamented sword and scabbard, worn, of course, purely for ornament, as swords are worn with Court dress here, for the Arab's weapon is a rifle, and in these days the most modern rifle at that. Their costume alone would cause people to turn their heads in the unreal East of Cairo or Port Said, where most native dresses have one or more European touches—boots, for example—but here it was as natural as a red coat in Leicestershire. But for his rifle and ammunition, there is nothing about an Arabian Arab fashioned otherwise than after the custom of 1000 or 2000 or even 3000 years ago. Their cotton clothes, though the cotton may be made in Lancashire, are as were those of their forefathers in Biblical times; and it always

amuses me to think that a judge's robes, or a clergyman's cassock, are merely the Arabian everyday dress transplanted to England—for good reasons originally, since they took the place of more primitive garments when England was not civilised but Arabia was. True, they had been altered in transit across Europe, but their place of origin was the cradle of man—Arabia, Palestine, and the Middle East.

If romance clung to the walls of Azrak, dramatic possibilities attached to our own position. Here were we, four British and one Egyptian officer, and eight British other ranks, comprising the air mechanics and the drivers and crew of an armoured car and Ford tender, which arrived that morning. In addition, there were the Sherif Nasser and his two slaves, and H.'s Egyptian servant. Our nearest help in the case of attack would be from the escort to the hamla, still a score or two of miles away, and small in numbers at that. Forty miles away, and between us and the nearest British post in the Jordan Valley, were a division and a half of Turks at Ammon. Azrak was comprised in the area of their aeroplane patrol (it had indeed been bombed during the previous winter, when L. was there), and in view of the possibilities of an attack from a British or Arab mobile column, already referred to, on their left flank at Ammon, it would seem a natural thing to scout the only watering-place from which an attack could be made. Our canvas tent, erected to hold the two machines, which arrived a day or two later, would in any case disclose that there was something unusual here. Yet, as good luck would have it—and our luck throughout the whole "show" was amazing—the only Turkish 'plane which came during our week's stay at Azrak made a perfunctory circle of the oasis at great height, seeing nothing, and returned no doubt to report at Ammon, "Nothing unusual." Thus did a young officer's slackness help in the subsequent downfall of a whole Turkish army. For if we had been discovered there, it is almost certain we should never have reached Deraa, the line would not have been cut, and after Allenby's great attack much more of the Turkish army would have escaped northwards, to join eventually, perhaps, Mustapha Kemal in Kurdistan.

In addition to ourselves, there were a few miserably poor Bedouin Arab families in and around Azrak, of a low type of intelligence, and it seemed to me that there was a danger of some of them telling the Turks of our existence at Azrak. L. always assured me there was none; and certainly, by the wonderful influence he so soon acquired over all of their race, he turned their rather sullen acquiescence in our presence on the day of our arrival into active interest and support before we left, whilst other nomad Arabs and even

peasants from the Hauran to the North came to see L. after the first day or two, and brought in some cases eggs, tomatoes, grapes, and melons for our delectation. Nevertheless, with £E.10,000 or £E.15,000 on L.'s head, there was a risk, and I once asked L. what he would do if the Turks from Ammon sent a raiding party on horses or camels by night to attack us at dawn. Owing to the lie of the ground our single armoured car would be little or no use against a surprise attack, and apart from the car we had no means of defence. L. replied, "The answer is, they won't send such a party. They are much too afraid of the Arabs." I was never entirely convinced, and, until the hamla and column arrived, I used to wake by instinct just before dawn, and steal out so as not to wake L. or the armoured car crew (after our first night's misery near the pools, we slept round the armoured car on high ground some three-quarter mile from the oasis), to scan the surrounding country for possible enemies as soon as the sun's rays pierced the mist, but they never came.

Very beautiful was the pale-pink of the desert and dark-green of Azrak, with the far-off outline of Gebel Druz in the background, at rise of sun. On the 9th August nobody arrived, but on the 10th our two 'planes safely reached Azrak. On the 11th J. and F. S. arrived by car, and Y., P., and S. H. with the hamla, and the Egyptian Camel Corps and Gurkhas arrived, bringing "Bivies" and other luxuries. The same day A. D. was to have flown over from Allenby's G.H.Q. for a final conference, but, being sick, sent another Staff officer, who had nothing to do with "Hedjaz operations," in his stead. Unfortunately, the latter, who had never before been up in the air, had suffered severely from air-sickness on the way, and consequently his system was not in a condition to stand the shock of being told by L., when he had asked what was our scheme of defence at Azrak —"our advanced base," as he professionally termed it—that "We haven't any; you see, the Turks will never come and look for us here." He retired gracefully on his 'plane, escorted by another 'plane, fully convinced, I feel sure, that the "whole outfit," as Australians say, would inevitably end in prison at Constantinople. On the 12th our medico joined us, and the same day arrived Prince Feisul himself, and the main body of the column.

All was now ready, and the excitement and strain were becoming unbearable. That night we had a reunion of the Britith mission over a meal that might almost be dignified by the title of a mess, followed by that glorious period of conversation or contemplation, according as to whether the individual is a talker or not, under the velvety sky, in an atmosphere neither too hot nor too cold, and with an exhilara-

tion reminiscent of the ozone of the sea in the soft breeze that one gets only in great treeless spaces on land after sundown. I do not think sufficient tribute has ever been paid to the desert night, though I personally know of few more pleasant things on earth (save in winter, when it is bitterly cold). In most warm climes the charms of the temperate night after the fierce day are marred by mosquitoes and other obnoxious insects. Except quite close to water, as, for example, in the oasis proper at Azrak, no living thing, insect or animal, disturbs the peace of the desert at night. Jackals and foxes are found only near water or cultivated land, never in the desert proper. A windless desert night has for me the charm of complete peace and calm.

On the 13th the Egyptian Camel Corps and Gurkhas marched out with two armoured cars to attempt the first demolition of the railway south of Deraa, with instructions to join us in two days' time; and at 5 A.M. on the 14th the rest of the fighting column marched, the Shereefian troops on their camels in long picturesque lines of single file (which would cause a hostile 'plane to imagine them to be Bedouins on the move), followed by the French gunners, partly on camels, partly on mules, with the British armoured car sometimes in front, sometimes behind, and the "tenders" where the best "road" was. J., the Doctor, and I rode in one of these tenders; but I am not sure, in view of the constant steppings and surveyings of the route and the general strain of proceeding by car in a roadless and practically unmapped country, if those in a car had any advantage over those on camels. The column did nineteen miles that day, and General Nuri, the Arab commander of the force, looked justifiably pleased. We halted in a wadi with excellent camel- and even mule-grazing, a great advantage in view of our very small supply of grain. On the 15th we marched at 5 A.M., the column swinging along in fine style in the cool of the morning. About 10.30 J. and I, after a spin—glorious after the shingle of the desert—in our Rolls-Royce tender over some hard mud flats that we passed, came in touch with the Egyptian Camel Corps demolition party, and learnt that they had been unable to effect their purpose owing to the opposition of a big band of local Bedouin Arabs, who threatened both to warn the Turks and attack the demolitionists as well, using the very human if selfish argument, "You are too small to do any good, or for us to throw in our lot with you. If and when we see Feisul and L. it will be different. They doubtless have an army. You are just a little band." To do these men justice, they kept their promise of telling the Turks nothing if the demolitionists would

withdraw unseen, and thus avoid Turkish reprisals for not keeping them (the Turks) informed of the presence of raiders. The rest of the journey that day was over very rough and broken ground with numerous wadis, and a very trying one for the three armoured cars and seven tenders. In the afternoon we passed Um El Jimal and El Baek, which, uninhabited to-day, are the remains of Roman villages or forts surprisingly little altered since the Roman times. They are on the edge of the "better country," with fair grazing even in August, that eventually merges into the rich plain of the Hauran, and from now onwards on our trek the desert was definitely left behind.

We caught a glimpse of the railway and Mafrak Station in the far distance. At Mafrak that day, M. in one of our 'planes brought down a Turkish 'plane. At dusk we reached the Wadi El Butm, and from there to our halting place at El Umteiye was a dreary crawl through the semi-darkness over villainous ground for cars, which involved constant stops and removal of boulders. El Umteiye, another deserted Roman fortified village, contained the first rain-water cistern that we had come to since Azrak, the mules having been watered the previous evening from fantassis or camel water-tanks, and the men from water-bottles, the camels of course not requiring water; and as soon as the main body marched somewhat wearily in about 7.30 P.M., they made straight for the cisterns, where animals and men, Arabs, French Colonials, Egyptians, and British, watered indiscriminately, in a way that would have turned the blood cold of a British A.D.M.S. or sanitary officer. Then hundreds of little fires were lit in all directions, producing in the bright moonlight an extraordinarily arresting effect. The unsentimental reader may ask why, considering we were now but fifteen miles or so from Deraa, our objective, fires or lights were allowed at all. The answer is that our original column had increased by half as much again, owing to its additions of local Ruweilah Arabs and a sprinkling of Druses, both sets of tribesmen well mounted on true Arab horses, with modern rifles slung across their shoulders, and dressed in a wonderful variety of vivid-coloured robes — brown, blue, and so on — with gorgeous horse-trappings. To have asked or commanded these wild undisciplined warriors to take such military precautions would have been to court disaster — at best losing their services, at worst, perhaps, sending them to warn the Turks. You cannot monkey with an Arab's customs, one of which is to have a fire to sit round at night. Though, from personal observation, I can scarcely put the fighting value of these troops of irregular horse as high as some of their admirers, such as L., with, of course, a hundred times greater knowledge than

mine, did, their moral value to us was considerable. From this period on some of them always marched with us, and their presence not only exercised a most salutary effect on the not too friendly villagers of the Hauran, who could have given us many unpleasant stabs in the back, but made our force from the air look far more imposing than it was. It must have puzzled the Turkish and Boche aviators to see our column one day at its normal strength of about 900, and the next swelled to nearly 2000 by the addition of 1000 Ruweilah horsemen who came and melted away, and returned as the spirit moved them.

To return to El Umteiye, L. and his fierce-looking bodyguard of fifty or sixty specially-tried Arabs on the fastest camels obtainable in all Arabia, with silver-studded saddles, glided in about 9.30 P.M. Silhouetted against the moon as they came over a rise, their appearance made the scene more like a Russian ballet than ever, whilst the whole colour-scheme of El Umteiye that night would have delighted Bakst.

The morning of the next day, the 16th, was spent in conference, the upshot of which was the decision that General Nuri and the main column should at once continue their march to the main Damascus railway north of Deraa, whilst L., J., and myself, in two armoured cars and a tender, should go and cut the railway south of Deraa that afternoon at a good bridge just north of where the previous unsuccessful attempt had failed, and catch up the column next day. We knew the railway in these parts was held by small and badly-constructed blockhouses, manned by Turkish garrison troops, but otherwise our information was scanty. At 2 P.M. we sallied forth, reaching the railway in about three-quarters of an hour, and made straight for a blockhouse in front of us. It was garrisoned by seven Turkish soldiers, who gallantly advanced to meet us and lined some pathetically inadequate trenches. Only a few minutes sufficed to enable the armoured cars to get into a position to enfilade them, when four of the Turks ran away into the blue, where we did not pursue them, as prisoners were a real hindrance, and the remainder, one of them being wounded, advanced towards us with uplifted hands. L. having cut the wires, assisted by the armoured-car officers, then set to work to lay a charge under the bridge, which was close to the station on the north, whilst J. and I tried our prentice hands at the new game of "planting tulips." "Tulips" were little charges of explosives placed under the centre of an iron sleeper, which, when they had gone off, not only bent the sleeper into an arc, but irremediably bent and twisted the rails on each side and drove a furrow across the bank. Thus twelve "tulips" meant twenty-four rails to be replaced. This particular species of explosive art, as well as its name, was

invented by the British Mission. On this occasion the bridge went up gloriously, and some of J.'s "tulips" (but, alas! only one of mine) exploded.

The tender broke a spring-bracket in this adventure, but was admirably and cunningly repaired by one of the drivers, who blocked it up with scantling. In addition to their other qualities, G. of the armoured cars and his officers and men were "tigers" at keeping their cars in order under the most adverse circumstances, and at executing running repairs that would have baffled nine motor mechanics out of ten.

Then, having looted what was worth taking in the block-house, we hurried back to El Umteiye before the Turks could have time to send the armoured train that they had in Deraa. As a matter of fact, Deraa had, according to plan, just been bombed by two British flights from Palestine, and it was fair to rely on the Deraa command being in a somewhat disorganised state—especially as it was almost their first experience of being thus treated. The aeroplanes had passed over us as we were on our way down to the railway, and, as they ploughed steadily in regular formation through the steely blue sky, they gave one a curious sense of security and British solidity in this wild land that we were in. The message seemed to be, "You are all by yourselves, but 'the Bull' and his strength aren't so far off." At break of day, next morning, we left El Umteiye, our wounded prisoner being considerably better as the result of the copious draughts of strong tea and "Black and White" which I had given him, against the advice of one of the car-drivers, who, in virtue of having done a St John's Ambulance Course ten years ago, thought he understood medicine. Our route lay over cultivated ground of rich loam, mostly barley or maize stubble, which made progress slow. We passed one village—El Taiyibe—where the very Anatolian and non-Arab-looking population were not very friendly, and impeded our progress through their village by clambering like monkeys over the cars: steps, mudguards, the bonnets of the cars, nothing came amiss to them as seats, and the lightness of their fingers surpassed those of a Derby Day pickpocket. They tried to steal ammunition out of the men's bandoliers, drinking-cups, petrol-tins, and anything they could lay hands on—truly a very poisonous set of people.

We reached the main body at about 8.30 A.M., just as the operation of forcing and crossing the railway north of Deraa was commencing. This General Nuri had decided to do close to the hill Tel Arar, which, though well out of rifle-range of Deraa, was not too far north to make it impossible to reach, on the same day, the bridge at Mezerib, on the Deraa-Palestine branch line, which we wished to blow up. On the railway, near Tel Arar, was a Turkish sangar, well sand-bagged, and its occu-

pants, a score or so of Turks, gave some trouble until the French mountain-guns came into action against it and finally smashed it up and killed the remnants of the garrison. Much more serious was the waspishness of the nine Turkish 'planes in Deraa, who bombed and machine-gunned us continually as we approached and occupied the line. They would empty their loads of bombs, and then coolly return to Deraa, alight, and reload in our sight, and then return. The continual crashing of what the Arabs graphically call "boombas" made the whole affair unpleasantly like modern warfare instead of the bashi-bazouk fighting that we understood. However, the bombs caused relatively few casualties, and the Shereefian regulars were wonderfully steady under this ordeal as they advanced slowly across the railway. The company who attacked the blockhouse especially impressed me with their morale. They had to advance over perfectly coverless ground, bombed and machine-gunned from above, and under fire, until our French guns started, from the Turks behind their sandbags; yet they kept excellent order. Deraa possessed, apparently, only one long-range gun, and I do not think it caused us a single casualty. Our own four little French guns, save for their brief pulverisation of the blockhouse, spent their time in attempting, not very successfully, to scare off the 'planes.

At last the column was over the line and in possession of the hill Tel Arar, which made a sortie of the Deraa garrison improbable. The Deraa troops consisted of a garrison battalion, plus a number of men employed in the railway repairing-shops and ordnance, and at the aerodrome, amongst whom were a considerable proportion of Boche Unterofficiers and N.C.O.'s. Our armoured cars and Ruweilah "cavalry" made it inadvisable for them to leave the trenches with which the town was surrounded, whilst an assault by us on the town, apart from the fact that it was no part of our object, would have meant far heavier casualties than we could have evacuated with our limited medical resources. So, especially whilst in possession of Tel Arar, we had little to fear from Deraa, except from bombs, but everything to fear from Damascus and the North, who, sooner or later, must hear of what had occurred, especially as one of the Deraa 'planes had gone off in that direction, and the tremendous explosions, just north of Tel Arar, where the Egyptian Camel Corps demolition party and their Gurkha allies were at work, on the line and a bridge, must have been giving warning of trouble to the blockhouses up the line north, all of whom were in telegraphic communication with Damascus.

As soon as we were over the line, a hurried conference between the various leaders decided that the Arab regulars, plus those of the Ruweilah "cavalry" who felt

inclined for the adventure, and two of the French guns, should push on, accompanied by L., to Mezerib, whilst the Egyptian Camel Corps and the British armoured cars should hold Tel Arar and the high ground opposite on the east of the railway, a demolition party continuing to do all the damage possible to the line.

Just as the conference broke up, one of our 'planes, a B.E.12 from Azrak, appeared in the distance (the other one had been put *hors de combat* in an air-fight three days before), and promptly three of the Deraa 'planes rose to fight him. L., grasping the danger the airman was in, rushed to get the "T" landing signal from a neighbouring car, whilst every one else, Arab, British, and French officers and men, worked feverishly at getting the worst of the boulders off the only available possible piece of landing-ground. Clearly it was our airman's only chance of life, as he had nearly finished his petrol, and the three Halberstadts were closing in on him and subjecting him to a raking fire, to which he responded as well as he could, coming lower every minute. He landed without being hit, but in "taxying" crashed into one of the few remaining boulders that we hadn't removed, crumpling up his machine, but escaping with only a few scratches himself. His life was undoubtedly saved by L.'s forethought and his own coolness. The enemy 'planes, after one bomb at the crashed machine, and a few vindictive spitfire tracer-bullets at us as we stood round congratulating the airman, returned to Deraa, and we were not bothered by them again to any great extent that day.

J. S., the airman, K., and I established ourselves on a little knoll north of Tel Arar, where we got a good view of the railway line, its shimmering telegraph-posts stretching away towards distant Damascus. On the far horizon, westwards, was Mezerib, and in the late afternoon from it came the sounds of gun-fire, followed by the welcome roar of explosives and a great fire, evidently that of the store of grain and petrol which we knew was there. This could only mean that our project had succeeded, and that north, south, and west of Deraa the sole lines of supply for the Turks' Palestine army had been cut, all within the space of twenty-six hours, and about the same time before Allenby was due to attack at midnight on the 18-19th. Whatever happened now—and if we ourselves were cut off and finished our excursion as prisoners in Damascus, which seemed at the moment quite likely—the Turks would be hampered by the fact that at least sixty hours must elapse before communications could be restored, and hampered at a time when they were going to experience the heaviest bombardment and strongest attack of the whole eighteen months' Palestine campaign.

Night came with no actual news from L. and the column, but about 11 P.M. a messenger arrived from the Arab officer

commanding the escort to the two French guns on Tel Arar, saying that he and the French gunner officer had orders to join the main column for an attack at dawn on another bridge, and that Mezerib Station, together with its stores, rolling-stock, and two lorries, had been taken and burnt. The message suggested that the armoured cars and tenders with J. and the rest of us should retire to El Umteiye, where the column would return within the next thirty-six hours. This, after a very weary time all through the rest of the night and most of the next morning, getting the "tenders" over the railway (moving a car at night over a roadless country is the height of unpleasantness, especially when you never know when you may be attacked) and collecting the armoured cars and the Egyptian Camel Corps, we did, reaching El Umteiye at noon; our friends of the previous day, the hooligans of Taiyibe village, speeding our parting with several shots at the rearguard.

Arrived at El Umteiye, lunch was the first consideration after a breakfastless morning, and we had scarcely finished it when information came that a train, apparently a construction train with a repair gang, was stationary on the line south of Deraa, close to where we had destroyed the bridge two days previously. This was too good an opportunity for our guerilla band to lose, and it was decided that an armoured car, accompanied by a tender with the airman and myself (the former armed with his aeroplane Lewis gun, to which he had been affectionately clinging since his crash), should make for the train and try and capture it. Our previous experience of the miserable half-starved Armenians and Syrians who did navvy work for the Turks did not lead us to believe that resistance would be very formidable. Off we went, and as we got nearer, we saw the seven or eight men who were working on the broken bridge, which had a scaffold on it, rush back to the train, seemingly in great confusion and alarm. When about 1500 yards away we stopped, and it was decided that "the airman," with his beloved gun, and I, should proceed on foot to a very good position in front, which seemed to be well within rifle-fire of the train. Meanwhile the armoured car was to go round to a flank and machine-gun the occupants from the same spot from which it had attacked the Turks on the 16th. Hardly, however, had the airman and I set out than there were some puffs of smoke from an innocent-looking box-truck, and a couple of "whizz-bangs" hurtled over our heads and landed unpleasantly close to our tender. As we could obviously do nothing against a train with guns on board, we pocketed our dignity, boarded our car, and in company with the armoured car pelted across the plain for home. Thanks to Messrs Rolls-Royce, Ltd., both cars accepted uncomplainingly the ordeal of being driven at about

forty miles an hour over ground every yard of which had enough water-channels and large stones to smash the axles and springs of most cars when proceeding at a crawl. Until out of range, the train's two guns shelled us with very fair accuracy, but without a hit. It was one of the few occasions that brother Turk round Deraa way had reason to smile in these few days, and when we reached El Umteiye, our brother buccaneers were full of inquiries as to where the prisoners were, and how many "tulips" we had planted, having witnessed our discomfiture from afar!!!

Sleep that night was very welcome after forty hours of excitement without it, and I did not wake until well after dawn. From the ground where I lay one got a fine view westward across the rolling plateau to the railway and beyond to the dim outline of the Palestinian hills, and the first sound that came to my ears was the dull "thud, thudding" of distant gun-fire. It was much the same indistinct but arresting booming in one's ears that I had heard more than once that summer at home in Sussex on leave, when there was a big attack in Flanders, and it was obviously the aftermath of Allenby's attack which had begun some seven hours previously. A few minutes later, as I lay propped on one elbow, drinking my morning cup of cocoa, and trying to solve the problem of doing so without divesting myself of my blankets, or exposing more than my mouth and hand to the cold of the morning (it was sufficiently late in the season, and El Umteiye was sufficiently high up to produce bitterly cold nights), there came the sound of shelling very much nearer, followed by several white puffs of smoke over the skyline towards Deraa. This woke J., S., and "the airman," who, like me, had been sleeping the sleep of complete exhaustion, and we all scrambled up and hurried off to a neighbouring ridge, from where we could see the rest of the column returning, according to plan, to rejoin us at El Umteiye, and being shelled by our friends of the night before, the guns on the train. They were, however, on our side of the line, and so there was not much to be feared.

Presently L. and his bedyguard arrived, none the worse for forty-eight hours' almost continuous "trekking" and fighting. He told us that they had failed to destroy the big bridge, but had made a complete end of Mezerib, and smashed the line there to some purpose; also, they had again blown up the railway south of Deraa, thus imprisoning our gun-train between two missing bridges, and got back with very few casualties. L. had just seen an enemy 'plane land near the railway, apparently because of engine trouble, and was anxious to return immediately with an armoured car and attack it. This he did, accompanied by "the airman," whose zest for adventure had been by no means cooled by his experiences in the last forty-eight hours. Arrived at the spot, they proceeded to

machine-gun the 'plane and its occupants, who, having advantages of ground, replied with vigour. In the midst of the contest, two other enemy 'planes appeared in the air, and bombed and machine-gunned the car to such purpose that it was compelled to return after an exceedingly narrow escape of being blown to glory, one bomb bursting so near it that a piece of shrapnel went through "the airman's" cap; L., too, got a small piece in his hand.

After this episode, breakfast at El Umteiye followed, and a great breakfast it was, of porridge, eggs, kidneys, and water-melons, and what would be known in India as "chupattees." All but the porridge were from locally purchased supplies, and indeed the rations that we had brought were practically exhausted, save for tea, sugar, and a few tins of milk. Y., who, as I previously explained, had acted as a sort of supply-officer-in-chief to the column (his exact position was difficult to determine, as indeed was every British officer's, "advice" being, so to speak, frequently merged into "executive action"), had done wonders in getting as many rations and sacks of grain up as he had done, in view of the fact that the drivers of the supply camels were all hired, and had not only never heard of the words "control" or "discipline," but were wholly ignorant of the existence of the eighth commandment; but he could not do impossibilities, and it had always been realised that for a considerable period we should have to live on the country. Y.'s principal efforts had been directed to providing ammunition and petrol and tyres for the cars and the 'planes at Azrak, and they had succeeded admirably, though we never had anything like a big reserve of petrol. All ranks of the column were now living on the mutton, eggs, tomatoes, grapes, water-melons, and barley purchased locally, and the animals got their living by grazing eked out with grain. To the Arabs the food was good and plentiful, and the same applied to the French gunners, who were mostly Algerians, and the Egyptians and Gurkhas. So far as the British rank and file were concerned, this local dietary was rather a pleasant change after bully and biscuits—with the exception of the "chupattees." To eat flat dough-cakes, made without yeast or baking-powder, is all right for a time, but in about a week the European stomach begins to strike at such treatment, and I remember still the real joy with which we saw biscuits again when we met the British forces. It was the first time I ever thought British Army biscuits were a luxury.

We had just finished breakfast on the day in question when an enemy 'plane appeared and subjected us to a rather bad bombing, killing some animals and wounding two Arab officers and a French gunner. This bombing had at any rate the good effect of causing the various units to spread themselves over the

plateau instead of all herding higgledy-piggledy round the wells, which they had done to save themselves extra trouble in drawing water. It also ridded us of a portion of the now vast multitude of camp-followers, pedlars, and Bedouin, who had come in from the surrounding country to do a little trading, learn the news, gossip, and generally relieve the tedium of existence in the Hauran. The gulf between the Englishmen and the natives, which even the fraternising qualities of the British soldier had not broken down in Egypt, was unknown here; and to the Haurani peasant, for example, with our kefias, beards, and not overclean sun-tanned faces, we probably looked but little different to the rest of the Arabs; but, however that may be, every one treated us as friends and equals. By an illiterate people that excel in small-talk, no chance of a gossip is ever missed, and not even my almost non-existent knowledge of Arabic, at any rate as spoken in Arabia, prevented me from being inveigled into long conversations with all kinds of people throughout the day. It usually started with a wild-looking man riding up to where I was sitting, dismounting, tying his horse to my bivy-pole, and then squatting at my side and asking, "Lorens Wenoo?"[1] If "Lorens" was anywhere in the vicinity I directed the visitor there, but if he was not, and if I could not pretend that he was with sufficient assurance, I had to endure at least half an hour of conversation, limited on my side to "Yes" and "No." Each visit entailed a further inroad on my rapidly diminishing store of the admirable Keating's well-known preparation, as well as a quarter of an hour's work repitching my bivy on the stony soil, for the horse invariably pulled it down long before his master was ready to go. It was therefore with some pleasure that, after the bombing of the morning in question, I observed a great rush for the blue on the part of women, children, donkeys, sheep, and the lords of them all, who came streaming by us, "riding a finish" on their foam-flecked ponies, and regarding with amazement the phlegmatic British armoured-car drivers, or the equally unconcerned Gurkhas, busy cleaning their rifles, seated in a little circle on the ground.

Later in the day L. left for Azrak to embark on an aeroplane, due to be sent from G.H.Q., E.E.F., in order to fly to Palestine G.H.Q., report what had occurred, and ask for aeroplane protection, and receive further instructions. The Egyptian Camel Corps and Gurkhas trekked, as it was decided that they had better return to Akaba in order to reduce the number of mouths to be fed, in view of the fact that rationing was bound to become a more serious problem each day. The rest of the column stayed at El Umteiye that day, but about ten o'clock at night General Nuri, the Arab com-

[1] Where is Lawrence?

mander, called a conference to decide on our future action, which was attended by the commander of the French contingent, J., Y., S., and myself. Nuri's point, which I think was unquestionably sound, was that the Turks, supine as they had been during the last three or four days, were bound sooner or later to take some drastic action in view of the menace to their whole line of communications that our presence in the neighbourhood constituted. This they could clearly do in several ways, the most obvious of which was to send a column to Azrak to cut off our line of retreat southwards by occupying the only watering-place on the route, and at the same time sending troops from Nablus or Damascus to Deraa to attack us in force at El Umteiye. Another possible plan was to send troops along the railway northwards from Ammon and southwards from Deraa (sooner or later the railway line was bound to be open to traffic, as we could not continue to destroy it indefinitely), and attack El Umteiye simultaneously from north and south. We, of course, did not know how the Palestine attack had succeeded; but, even if the first objective of a twelve-mile advance had been attained, it did not make our position any easier. The discussion was conducted partly in French, partly in English, and partly in Arabic; and I remember, when using the first-named language, General Nuri made use of the phrase, "Nous sommes en un endroit," with some very apt remarks on the danger of such a position from the teachings of military history. He further pointed out that the fact that we had gone forward to Deraa and then retired would be construed by the local inhabitants, on whom we virtually depended for food, as a set-back, and that they, who all the time were waiting to see which way the cat jumped, might become hostile to us. Moreover, we should infallibly be bombed again next day if we waited at El Umteiye, and the morale of the column would not be improved thereby; his strongest point of all was that he had had information that a Turkish reconnaissance from Deraa might be expected at dawn the next morning to endeavour to make us disclose our strength. Shorn of a goodish proportion of the local irregulars, who had departed that day as it happened by order, and only temporarily, as well as of the Egyptian Camel Corps and Gurkhas, our force was far smaller than when it crossed the railway at Deraa, and a reconnaissance would prove to the Turks how easy it would be to "mop up" a force whose body was so small, but whose sting was so annoying and indeed dangerous. Up to date, the adventure had succeeded beyond all reasonable expectation, but, after all, the whole scheme was a gamble pure and simple, and we were tempting Providence by remaining much longer where we were. To do so would be as if a roulette-player, having won eight or ten times running on red, ignored the possibility of black ever coming

up again. For an hour we argued and discussed the problem in our several languages (sometimes in two or three at once), and at last it was decided that we should there and then start out for Um El Surab, a ruined village some miles south of El Umteiye, on the way to Azrak. Here we should be farther from Deraa, more than a day's march in fact, and, provided a column from the latter place had more than a night's march to reach us, we were pretty sure to have warning of its departure. Here also there was less of a landmark for bombing than was afforded by El Umteiye, with its sentinel Roman fort on the top of a sugar-loaf hill. At Um El Surab there are the remains of a Roman fort and village, but it stands in the midst of a great plain full of small wadis and depressions, and pock-marked with ancient and modern grain-pits that afford excellent ready-made funk-holes. Um El Surab was obviously a more desirable location than El Umteiye, a landmark for miles around.

So just before midnight the conference broke up, and an hour or so later the column commenced its midnight flitting, the Arab soldiery receiving, with oriental fatalism, the information that they were to face their third successive sleepless night, and the British armoured-car and other drivers accepting the prospect of another weary and perilous night-drive over boulder-strewn ground with resignation and the expletives (when their officers were out of hearing) appropriate to the occasion. Marching all night doubtless seems a small hardship to those accustomed to a European front, but it must be remembered that, living as we were without tents and with only a few single-sheet "bivies," the heat in such a climate and the flies made sleep almost impossible in the day, however weary one was; so a night's march meant thirty-six hours at least without sleep. I have always held the view that the conditions under which we fought the Turk in Sinai, Palestine, and Arabia—with their long days and weeks of exposure to a sun, the fierceness of which is unnatural to an Englishman, and the mental and physical strain of want of sleep in a climate where sleep is essential to repair the vitality of a white man—did something to balance the far greater danger and horror of war in France. One had only to compare the sallow complexions, sun-tired eyes, and leanness of a leave-draft from the Palestine front with the well-favoured, rosy-cheeked men from France one saw on the Boulogne leave-boat, to realise the truth of this.

(*To be concluded.*)

VIGNETTES.

BY ELLA MACMAHON.

IV. THE POSTMISTRESS OF BALLYBOREEN.

THE post-office at Ballyboreen is not conventional, neither is Ballyboreen itself. The latter consists of a conglomeration of cottages situated round the cross-roads in a cup formed by the encircling hills, and bounded on the south by the winding river. The cottages have four white-washed walls and a thatched roof, for the hand of modernity and hygiene has not yet laid hold of Ballyboreen; and so your manure-heap may still, an' you choose to have it so, form a feature in front of your hall door, through which your pig and your poultry are at liberty to wander in and out as the fancy takes them. There is no beauty of climbing creeper or blushing rose about the cottages of Ballyboreen, nor any prettiness such as the least picturesque of English villages can easily furnish; but, on the other hand, there is a wondrous loveliness over it all, —loveliness of blue and violet hillside, of emerald field, of brown bog, of tall woods, of a wide river wending its shining way to the sea. There is a church which is Protestant, surrounded by a churchyard wherein Catholics and Protestants alike sleep side by side in a peace which polemics will never break. There is an old stone bridge with shallow arches of exquisite yet artless symmetry. There is beautiful air; there are bad roads.

The post-office is housed in a thatched cottage, or, to be precise, in two adjoining cottages standing in a dip at one corner of the cross-roads, for which reason it bears a somewhat secluded air. Its presiding genius is Miss Kerrigan. She is indeed His Majesty's postmistress, though in truth she knows nothing of Majesty so remote and so exclusively English. It is perhaps part of the eternal wrongness of the Administration which rules Ireland that the personal tie should be eliminated from the official government of a people always profoundly and supremely influenced by the personal equation.

Miss Kerrigan is a tall woman with a gaunt look, although in point of fact she is rather stout. She has a large, flat, but fleshy face and a wide head. Her hair is a streaky grey, and she wears it partly gathered up into a bird's-nest coil on the top of her head, and the remainder falling lankly in straight short locks to her shoulders and forming a frame for her face. Her eyes are the palest blue, with very pink-rimmed lids.

I confess Miss Kerrigan gives me creeps. I have no foundation whatever for the feeling, unless it be the unpleasant effect of those extraordinarily pale pink-rimmed eyes, with the lank frame of grey hair narrowing the large face. The official entry to Ballyboreen post-office further arouses feelings of embarrassment. Why, when the office is situated in one of two adjoining cottages, the sole door must needs open into the one in which Miss Kerrigan and other members of her family live is a mystery. But so it is. In order to get into the office you are obliged to make your way through Miss Kerrigan's kitchen, which is very dark, being lit by a three-foot square window, reinforced by the flames of a turf fire which burns smokily on the open hearth, with a pot hanging over it. There is always some one eating in a corner, and few things are more embarrassing than to intrude upon strangers during a meal, despite the fact that public meals are favourite festivities of our high civilisation. When postal business compels me thither, I can feel myself sneaking through that living-room in hot shamefacedness to the office, which is separated from the other by a half-door in the partition wall. The half-door has a ledge intended, doubtless, to form a counter, at which customers may stand and parley with the official on the other side of it. But one never does that in Ballyboreen; on the contrary, the half-door is always wide open, and the postmistress shows you inside and follows, there to engage you in conversation. Miss Kerrigan is not a great talker as talkers go in Ireland, but she can speak, and to the point when needful. She can even become eloquent upon certain subjects. One of these is the varying changes in the routine of postal duties, for she abhors changes. For example, the introduction of the telephone into the reception and transmission of telegraphic messages is a rankling source of indignation.

"What call had they to be altering the old way," she asks, with cold and deliberate passion, "if it t'wasn't to spite us?"

Another and even more bitter diatribe is aroused by any mention of the National Health Insurance Act.

"I declare to God!"—Miss Kerrigan always folds her arms across her ample bosom when she utters this—"that was the sin of the worrld, so it was; as if we hadn't enough to do, an' more than we *could* do, without that. An' the dear knows"—a thin scornful laugh cuts the acrid words through—"there's as many have died since *that* came out as ever died before it, and more, for them doctors 'll let ye die now for the fun of it, when they wouldn't be getting the money from ye."

This dark and dreadful insinuation awakes in me a mocking echo of the dulcet

oratory which introduced these "rare and refreshing fruits" to a sick world.

"What do *you* want?" With this question, Miss Kerrigan whirls round upon a small bare-legged child who has been standing upon one foot, the other tucked up beneath her faded red flannel petticoat, in apparently charmed contemplation of myself. The little girl gives a violent start and lets her second foot drop precipitately to the ground.

"Me ma wants a stamp," is the reply in a voice husky from sudden shyness.

"Why couldn't you say so sooner?" With morose dignity Miss Kerrigan approaches the grimy receptacle in which her books of stamps are contained. "Is it a penny or a halfpenny or a *three*-halfpenny stamp yer ma wants?" she asks severely.

"Three-halfpenny," is the still huskier reply, and the applicant tenders sixpence in silver.

The postmistress of Ballyboreen pushes the required stamp over the table, and counts the coppers with growling hauteur. She gives a halfpenny too little, then rectifies the mistake with an air of exasperated patience.

"They're a nuisance these three-halfpenny stamps," I interpose, partly to appease her, and partly to relieve my own embarrassment.

"They're a curse, and that's God's truth," is Miss Kerrigan's response. "What are they for, in God's name, but to rob the poor and puzzle ye in yer change?"

To this I have no reply ready. Before I can think of one, Miss Kerrigan's sister thrusts in her head and gazes at me with an amiable if slightly vacant smile.

Miss Kerrigan's sister is a dwarf and misshapen.

It is said in Ballyboreen that she's "not right." Legend affirms that three days after her birth her mother "awoke in her bed and saw her own child—may the Lord of Mercy preserve us!—being snatched out of the cradle by a fairy-woman, and 'another' left in its place. An' sure, she (the mother) let one screech, and the right sense left her. They got the priest, and he brought holy water, but she never did a ha'porth of good, and they buried her that day week."

Supernatural talents are, in consequence, ascribed to Miss Kerrigan's sister, and great care is taken to be civil to her. Perhaps it is owing to this that when, one day, I take my letters to the post, and she interposes herself between the slit in the front wall of the post-office in which you insert them on their way to regions beyond, and myself, I meekly await her pleasure.

"Not within," she announces mysteriously, "not within there."

The day is hot, and I am tired, and bored by the interruption; nevertheless, sudden suspicion awakes in me.

For weeks past, at or about midnight, a thin quick whistle

has resounded through the woods and round the cross-roads at Ballyboreen, and we all know, though we may not choose to say so openly, what it means. It is the call to arms, Sinn Fein arms, and the drilling has been going on night after night in flagrant defiance of the rulers of Ireland.

Conspiracy, a new conspiracy, flashes before me through the summer haze. Arms, drilling, risings—nay, Rebellion once more. 1916 is not so far away that its details are forgotten. Is Ballyboreen post-office to be the headquarters this time? Heaven knows, it looks innocent enough with the sunshine on its lowly whitewashed walls and roof of brown thatch. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Miss Kerrigan's aura envelops it with a sinister atmosphere. What if——? And if——?

I confess to a wild impulse to run away, regardless of my plain duty or anything else. For my duty is quite clear—it is, if anything is wrong, to inform the authorities at once; but the authorities are far away—they generally are—and Miss Kerrigan is near: that reflection makes me long to run away even more strongly than before. Shame, however, goads me to try a desperate plunge after my fleeing courage. If I am worth my salt, I can at least make an attempt to discover what is wrong with Ballyboreen post-office. I wave Miss Kerrigan's sister aside grandly, for even if she is "not right" I will not allow her to cow me. As I try to push my letters into the slit, I wonder if she can see how my hand is shaking. Whether she can or not, one thing is clear—the letters won't go in. Perhaps Miss Kerrigan's sister has "bewitched" the box—anyhow they fall out again at my feet. Stooping to pick them up, a horrid wave of sick panic goes over me, and I turn from heat to cold, with nauseating sensations.

When I raise my head Miss Kerrigan herself is standing at her open door looking at me. A minute or a century, I know not which, passes as we face one another. She is the first to speak.

"Is it the letters," she says composedly, "that ye'd be after posting? Here"—she stretches out a large hand—"I'll post them for ye. Sure, the box is full up."

The last words clear my brain. Ballyboreen box full up indeed at this time of day, or at any time! Suspicion gives way to certainty, and with it comes that desperation which nerves cowardice. I grip the letters more firmly. Miss Kerrigan may no doubt be His Majesty's postmistress, but she is not to be trusted. As if she had divined my thoughts, she smiles, and the smile makes her eyes look paler and the eyelids pinker than ever.

"Come inside then and I'll clear the box for ye."

I hesitate: is it a trap?

Miss Kerrigan turns about and—I follow her inside. As usual there are people—a couple of men—eating at the table in the dark corner. Are they——?

"'Tis too bad," Miss Kerrigan is saying with great geniality, "but sure I didn't think there'd be e'er a one seeking the letter-box so early in the day. I do put the meat for the week in there to keep it cool. 'Tis easily jaded with the heat, and that's a grand wire cage, and the dra-ft comes through it like a big wind."

Forth from the official receptacle for the outward mails at Ballyboreen post-office Miss Kerrigan draws carefully—a leg of mutton. . . .

Like the man in the Scripture, I opened the door and fled!

THE GOLD-SEEKERS.

Fertilissimi sunt auri Dardæ.

BY AL KHANZIR.

We all know that there are in this world certain places where one cannot reappear, after the lapse of no matter how many years, without running across a friend. Among such places the Yacht Club in Bombay must assuredly rank high, for that eminently comfortable spot means to many Easterners, as it does to me, either civilisation's first foretaste or her last farewell, according to whether ours is a homeward or an outward journey.

Last April I made one of my periodical descents on the Yacht Club. The war was over at last, home leave had been reopened, and I had found myself among the favoured few selected to go with the first batch. Mine had been the very ordinary story of a regimental officer throughout the war—Egypt, Gallipoli, Egypt again, and then Mesopotamia. My battalion had been selected finally to form part of the post-bellum garrison of Assyria, and I had just completed the wearisome journey by desert, river, and sea from Mosul to Bombay.

The boat from Basra had got in only that very morning, and as the leave-boat sailed next day, I had had a busy time. So it was late when I got to the Yacht Club, and I found the big downstairs bar-room already crowded. But most of the crowd were boxwalas, none of whom I happened to have met, and at first I could not see a single face I knew.

However, I had not long to wait for the expected friend, and I could not have asked for a more welcome one; for I had hardly got my drink when the swing-doors opened, and in came dear old Douglas Rowland. Douglas is a political.[1] A certain summer, a few years before the war, had found me shooting in Ladakh, that quaint old Western Tibetan kingdom, now an outlying province of the dominions of His Highness of Jammu and Kashmir. At that time Rowland had been in charge at Leh, the former Tibetan capital, in whose great bazaar the traders of half a continent forgather on their way to India, bringing with them in their pony-packs the brick-tea of China, and the borax and the wool, the musk and the turquoises of Tibet, the carpets of Bokara, and the felts of Kashgar and Yarkand. A bad go of snow-blindness had driven me in to Leh—for treatment by the Moravian Mission doctor there

[1] The Political Department is India's Diplomatic and Consular Service.

—and Rowland had taken me into his charming house and treated me like a brother. Bottled beer and gram-fed mutton in Ladakh—the memory of them lingers still! We had not met since, but it did not take us long to find out that we were both bound for home next day, and to arrange to dine together.

At dinner our knowledge of each other's recent doings was quickly brought up to date.

"After that summer you were up shooting in Ladakh," Rowland began, "I stayed on in Leh till the spring of '14. It was a good job and suited me. My summers in Leh were lonely of course, except when fellows like you came up and stopped with me, for the only other white folk were the Moravian missionaries. But after all, the shooting was well worth it, for it is not every one who has his way paid by Government to shoot an *Ovis ammon*. Then, of course, in winter I went down to Kashmir and lived like a Christian amongst my fellow-men, with some of the finest duck-shooting in the world at my door—no, I've no complaints against Leh.

"But early in '14 they transferred me to the Gulf, and then the war came. At first, of course, I applied repeatedly to be allowed to rejoin my old battalion, but I was, it appeared, indispensable, and as a matter of fact the Hun 'agents provocateurs' did keep us quite busy. After a bit I was transferred to Teheran and thence to the South-Eastern Caspian. There I have been sitting in splendid isolation for the last two years at the court of a Kurdish potentate called the Khan of Bujnurd. He's nominally under the Shah, but as a matter of fact he doesn't give two hoots for any one; so I felt a little lonely sometimes, especially when he commenced to discuss with me in a perfectly academic spirit the probable outcome of his cutting off my head. However, he decided against it in the end—I really never quite knew why.

"In normal times it would not have been too bad at Bujnurd, for there is some good fishing near-by—a fish very like the mahseer. Then, too, there are quite a few tigers in the heavy forest by the Caspian—sort of Terai country it is. No, not the long-haired tiger—the ordinary one. But as things were, I had to keep a very close eye on my Khan, to try to head off Pan-Turanian emissaries from Baku and Bolsheviks from Turkestan, so I was too busy for anything of that sort. Yes, I have just come down from there—a longish trek it is, too."

"Talking about those Moravians at Leh," I said, "I wonder what happened to them in the war? Of course they were Huns to a man, so I suppose they were interned, but I must say I think they might have been made exceptions. Mind you, I hold no particular brief for their missionising, for as a matter of fact they probably did not make a convert from one year's

end to another,—Buddhists don't proselytise readily. But if they did not save souls, at least they mended bodies: it is the medical side of the Moravian Mission for which the most stiff-necked Buddhist must be thankful, and many a sahib too, who has fallen sick hundreds of miles from other help when shooting in the hills. You remember old Weismann, and what a fine fellow he was? I should like to meet him again, for I often think of that story you told me about him—how he heard that poor Kenway was lying sick over the passes from Leh, and how he went to fetch him, and crossed the Karzong La twice in one day to reach him and bring him in! In December too, wasn't it? Over the Karzong twice in one day in mid-winter—that's some going. And he saved Kenway that time, though he died later actually in Leh. But you were still there then, so of course you know all about it. Weismann must have been vexed that he failed to save him a second time."

"Yes, I was there all right when Kenway died; but Weismann could not well save him then, for to the best of my belief he was himself already dead."

"You don't say so—I never heard of that; but then, of course, one wouldn't, for they don't publish the death of a Moravian padre in the casualty lists. How did it happen, for he was hale and hearty when last I saw him?"

"Well, we must put Weismann down as 'missing, believed killed,' for as far as I know there is none now alive who saw him die; Kenway probably was there, but then Kenway is dead too. It is a very queer story, and at the time it did not seem to me that any good could come of making public all I knew. But with you it is rather different—for you know the country, and you knew the men concerned—so if you care for the story after dinner I'll tell it to you as well as I can. As a matter of fact, there is a letter, too, which Kenway left me; only yesterday I happened on it in my kit just out of Cox's, so I'll fetch it after dinner, as it is quite handy here in my room."

When dinner was finished we went downstairs to the lawn, and choosing two chairs by the balustrade overlooking the harbour, settled down with our cigars. Stretching out his legs and leaning back in his chair, Rowland began—

"You knew Kenway, of course. Only just met him? Oh, well, I knew him well. He was a very remarkable man. He had been in some Highland regiment, but went early on coming into the family place in Dorset. While he was still in the Service he had been a bit of an archæologist and a great linguist too—was one of the very few fellows in the British Service with a 'Degree of Honour' in Persian. So, when he realised that money was short and that he would find it very hard to scrape along as a county magnate at

home, he let his place to a rich American and wandered about the world to indulge his archæological bent. But in his subaltern days he had been up in Kashmir on leave, and had got so bitten with that country that in after years he was never long away from the Himalaya. He would spend years on end pottering about amongst the Buddhist inscriptions and remains of Western Tibet and Kashmir—a humble follower in the footsteps of Aurel Stein. I met him several times on his wanderings and liked him immensely, for he always struck me as a large, sane, self-reliant individual, differing from the ordinary run one meets, in that, though he had a very healthy liking for the flesh-pots, still he could deny himself for years together in pursuit of his hobbies. He was a very keen sportsman too; but in this the naturalist always came first, and I remember he was one of those most interested in the proposed mammal-survey of the Himalaya that the Duke of B—— had in view at one time. With all this, he was one of the best-read men I have ever met, full of all sorts of abstruse knowledge, especially of Asiatic history—which, of course, was a necessary concomitant of his archæology. In fact, he was at once a man of the world, a savant, and a sportsman—and a most charming companion at all times.

"It was the winter before you were last up in Leh, wasn't it, that Weismann brought in Kenway over the Karzong La? He had a very bad go of enteric, but the Moravians pulled him through, and by the time I reached Leh that spring he was already convalescent. He had originally intended crossing the Karakorum that summer to have a look at the ruins round Khotan, but after his illness he did not feel fit enough to go so far afield. He had found a kindred spirit in Weismann, who was himself, of course, a recognised authority on all sorts of Tibetan lore,—I remember he had been busy for years on a monumental work which he meant to call a 'Corpus Inscriptionum Tibeticarum,' or some such name, if it had ever been finished. Weismann had told Kenway a lot about the remains of an ancient monastery at Spadum in Zanskar, only a few marches from Leh across the Indus, so finally Kenway decided to put off Khotan till later and to spend the summer investigating Spadum.

"I saw nothing of Kenway all summer; but Weismann went over to spend some weeks with him, and on his return came to tell me about the doings at Spadum. It happened to be a busy day, so I'm afraid I did not give the old boy the attention he deserved. However, I gathered that Kenway had roped in a perfect army of the local Zanskaris, and between them they had unearthed buried ruins of very considerable extent and—according to Weismann—of tremendous interest. Kenway was still out in Zanskar when I went back

to Kashmir that autumn, and I understood that he intended wintering in Leh to arrange all the material he had collected at Spadum.

"Sure enough, next spring I found him still in Leh, busy with the arrangements for his deferred trip to Khotan; and, somewhat to my surprise, I heard that Weismann was to go with him. I helped them both a good deal with their preparations, and remember being struck with the extent of the 'bandobast' they were making. The Karakorum road to Turkestan is a big enough undertaking certainly, but Kenway was buying horses and mules wholesale and paying fancy prices for the best. Old Mohan Lal, the merchant in the Leh bazaar, was acting as his agent in this. You remember the good old boy, of course? He drank himself to death in the winter of '13, I'm sorry to say, and how they manage now in Leh without him I can't think. Well, in the end they got together as well-found a caravan as ever left Leh. Chiefly Zanskari ponies they had bought—they're much the best; and Kenway had got hold of old Mahommed Mish as caravan-bashi. He couldn't have done better than that, for the old man went with Malcolmson through Tibet in '96, and knew Central Asia like the palm of his hand.

"One evening, just before they were due to start, Kenway came over to dinner with me and brought Weismann with him, and after dinner we settled down by the fire in my study. It was the last time I ever saw them together, and the scene comes back to me very clearly: the dark room, with its flickering firelight dimly revealing Kenway—solid and well-groomed even in his old shooting-suit—lying back reposefully in his arm-chair, in marked contrast to Weismann, lean and cadaverous, with straggling brown beard, who was crouching forward to the blaze and playing nervously with those blue glare-glasses that he never went without.

"I remember telling them then that I expected a long account of their doings when they got back."

"'As a matter of fact,' Kenway replied, 'that is just what I want to talk to you about. Of course Central Asian exploration is always a bit of a risk; but there are some peculiar features about this trip of ours, so, though it may seem rather nonsense to you, we both feel we are in for a pretty big undertaking accompanied by more than the usual danger. For that reason we want somebody to know where we have gone in case we don't turn up again; but if you were to hear our plans now, in your official position you might feel obliged to put a spoke in our wheel. So here is a letter that I want to give you, but I'm going to ask you not to read it till we have been gone a month. Do you agree?'

"'All right,' I said; 'you

can give me the letter, and I promise not to read it for a month, perhaps not then, for as long as you don't ask me to connive with you in infringing the orders of Government you can go anywhere you please as far as I'm concerned —to Timbuctu and back if you want to. But mind you take care of yourselves all the same; we don't want any regrettable incidents or complications.'

"So Kenway gave me this letter, and shortly after he and Weismann started on their travels. Some time during the summer I opened the letter: here it is, and this is what I read:—

'DEAR ROWLAND,—W. and I have gone, not to Khotan, but into Tibet—as you probably suspected. But what will surprise you is the reason for our going: we have gone for gold. Now, do not be in a hurry to put us down as mere fatuous treasure-hunters, but first let me explain to you the grounds on which we are basing our search.

'Now, has it ever struck you, I wonder, what a prominent place in history the gold of this part of the world has always held? Perhaps you have never thought about it; anyway the subject has always had a fascination for me, and for years I have been tabulating in my mind odd scraps of evidence bearing upon it.

'To begin very far back—the Greek and Roman writers teem with references to the subject. One of the earliest allusions is to be found in Herodotus, as you may remember; and as his account has a very important afterbearing on my story, I shall quote him more or less in full. This is what he says:—

"Another kind of Indians live in the land of Paktyika, away towards the North from the rest of the Indians; their manner of living is much the same as that of the Bactrians. These are the most warlike of all the Indians, and it is they who are sent for the gold. For in this country there is a sandy desert, and in this sand there are ants which are smaller than dogs but larger than foxes. . . . These ants make for themselves burrows below ground, and in doing so throw up the earth as ants do with us, and in the same manner; they also look exactly like ours. This thrown-up sand contains the gold, and for the sake of this sand the Indians are sent into the desert. . . . When the Indians arrive at the place with their leather bags, they fill these with sand and ride away as quickly as possible, for the ants — who have found out what has happened through their sense of smell — are at once after them, and they are exceedingly swift. Thus, if the Indians do not gain a good start before the ants have gathered, none of them would escape" (Herodotus, lib. iii. 98-106).

'Of course it is very generally agreed that the "Indians"

to whom Herodotus refers are none other than the Dards. Now we know that in very early times there was a big Aryan migration of Dards up the Indus towards Tibet, indeed here in Ladakh to this day we find pure Dard settlements mingled with the Tibetans of the Indus valley right into Tibet proper, and I think it is almost certain that it was our local Dards whom Herodotus had in his mind. You must admit, then, that his story points to there having been plenty of gold about—whatever its source may have been, and however little you may be prepared to accept his ants.

'After Herodotus we find Magasthenes independently corroborating the story of our local gold, from information he himself derived when ambassador in India; moreover, he too gives most circumstantial evidence about the gold-digging ants.

'Then again Ktesias, the physician, in his "Indika," talks of the gold of the Upper Indus and Western Tibet, and though he does not mention the ants, still he tells us that gold was so plentiful and found in such a readily obtainable form, that the normal methods of washing were here unnecessary.

'Pliny is the last classical authority I shall quote, and his reference is the more remarkable because he mentions our Dards actually by name. I refer to his well-known line—

'"Fertilissimi sunt auri Dardæ,
Setæ vero argenti."
—Lib. vi. c. 19.

'So, you see, in his day the Dards were as noted for their gold as the Seths—the hereditary bankers of India—still are for their connection with silver.

'Now, though the above by no means exhausts my list of classic authorities, I think those I have quoted are enough to prove my point. It has always puzzled me to know what the source of all this gold can have been; for where, to-day, is the gold-bearing desert of Herodotus—where the gold-fields of Ktesias—why has the glory of the Dards departed? I felt that much more was needed to account for all these than the puny gold-workings on the Upper Indus and the Tibetan mines of Chokkjalung, which are all that remain to-day. Yes, something more was needed—and W. and I think that we have found out what that something is.

'The fame of our gold was not by any means confined to the times of Greeks and Romans,—come to later days and you will find that the traditional riches of Western Tibet have appealed to adventurers throughout history, for when the Tang Dynasty ruled China, in the days of Saxon England, the "Divine Khan" heard of these riches, and sent out his armies in an effort to obtain them. Again, about the time of Bannockburn, Zulkadar Khan the Tartar and his host perished in the snows of the Tibetan passes on the same quest. Later, that Emperor of Delhi

—the exploits of whose reign would have put to the blush a Caligula or a Nero—Muhammad Tughlak, heard the same tale of gold for the gathering, a thing he was ever peculiarly in need of, and launched an army of a hundred thousand men, of whom not a single soul survived. You remember, too, how some eighty years ago, Zorawar, the Great Captain of the Dogras, conquered Ladakh for his master Gulab Singh of Jammu. But afterwards, why did he embark on his mad march farther eastwards — into Tibet in the midst of a Tibetan winter — to perish miserably for his pains? What was it that befooled so tried a leader—what was it that lured all these armies to their doom? Gold—nothing but the lure of gold for the gathering: the lure that has attracted men of all the ages, from Jason to Dan M'Grew. And still the gold is there — somewhere — waiting for the finding. Spadum has given us our clue to the finding of it.

'For this is what we found at Spadum. The monastery is of great antiquity, and was no doubt founded by those disciples sent out by King Asoka to preach the Excellent Law, after the third great Buddhist Council of Patna, about 250 B.C. Those early missionaries of course were orthodox Buddhists of the Buddhism of the Dards, their converts, and of the monastery they had founded. But about 1000 A.D. came an invasion from Central Tibet that broke the power of the Dards and swept away the Yellow Robe, establishing in its place the lamaist[1] Buddhism of Lhassa. It was then that Spadum was destroyed, and its ruins are now almost as completely buried as are the remains of Nineveh, of Asshur, or of Taxila. Some few rock-carvings there are still visible above ground; but these are of no special interest, for the usual religious subjects only are represented — the most prominent being a typical carving of the Buddhas of the Five Kalpas seated upon Lotus Thrones, with the Maitreya in his three-pointed crown presiding as the central figure.

'It was not till we came to excavate the cells below the monastery that we made our real discoveries, for then we found a room which must, we think, have been a large hall of audience, the back wall of which is formed by the face of a huge boulder. As we cleared away the rubbish we discovered this face to be covered with carvings and inscriptions. The topmost carving to be unearthed was an ordinary figure of Buddha seated upon a lotus; but below this there first appeared a long inscription in Brahmi characters of about 150 B.C., and then you can imagine our excitement as the surface yielded inch by inch

[1] The Tibetan Buddhists adhere to the "Greater Vehicle of the Law" propounded by Kanishka's Fourth Council. The Lamas are of two persuasions—Red Caps and Yellow; but the robe of both these persuasions is red.

to our digging, disclosing even more unexpected carvings beneath.

'Instead of the Garudas—mythological birds—or rows of pyramidical chaityas, which were the sort of things we had expected, we found the best example of an early Dard rock-picture I have ever seen, representing five men fighting for their lives against a swarm of small animals that were attacking them. Four of the men were depicted as defending themselves with spears, whilst the fifth was making off with a big bag on his back. As for the attackers, they seemed to have claws something like those of gigantic lobsters, and to be crawling out of holes in the ground; we were quite defeated as to what nature of beast they were meant to be.

'Then Weismann got busy deciphering that Brahmi inscription. Fortunately that is W.'s long suit, as you know, so in a few days he had got the gist of the sentence, the end of which is somewhat defaced. His translation is as follows:—

"Hail!—the Jewel in the Lotus. Preserved by the Lord Buddha, the Seekers have returned with much gold. From the Three Lakes, for fifty days fared they out through the land where no man dwells, towards the rising sun. In the Mountains of the Yak's Head many were slain by the Keepers of the Gold . . ."

'Now, though at first sight this may seem rather cryptic, still it evidently referred to my old friends the Dard gold-seekers, so I need not tell you how excited I was to find myself brought into touch with them, as it were, first hand. As you will see, too, the inscription gave us our clue to the full meaning of the rock-picture, for soon after, as we were examining it in the light of W.'s translation, all of a sudden Herodotus's old story of the Indians and the ants came back to me, and—"Ants, by Gad!"—I shouted to Weismann, who was so startled that he dropped those blue spectacles of his. "Ants? Where?" he asked, looking about him. "Why, there, on the rock—the gold-digging ants of Herodotus for a fiver. They're the Keepers of the Gold." "Lieber Gott! I believe you are right," said he, and the more we looked the more certain of it we became.

'You see, as we understood it, the figure of Buddha was a thank-offering erected by the gold-seekers, while the picture below showed the dangers they had faced: and if we were right about the ants, then, as you must admit, the whole carving is a most astonishing corroboration of Herodotus's story. But most important of all, the inscription tells us too where his "desert" lies in which the gold is found.

'We both believe that we have solved that problem. The first part of it is easy: The "Three Lakes" are the Panggong Tso—that string of lakes extending for ninety miles from our border into

Tibet, for the Panggong is sometimes so called to this day. Thence the gold-seekers went fifty marches "through the land where no man dwells, towards the rising sun"—that, of course, must mean E.N.E. through the Northern Tibetan Chang, for the Chang has been uninhabited since the beginning of time. But the mention of the "Mountains of the Yak's Head" is the clearest bit of all, for I am certain that these must be that northern spur of the Kuen Lun which Sven Hedin on one of his journeys saw in the far distance. He tells us that, though the La Shung Tartars never penetrated to these mountains on their wanderings, still they know them as the "Buka Magna," or Mountains of the Wild Yak's Head. Now, in country like this, names never change, but are handed down from father to son throughout the ages; they were the same in the days of Fa Hian's pilgrimage as they are to-day. And the Buka Magna are just about fifty marches from the Panggong too. Yes, I am sure we have got it—it was in the Buka Magna that the Dards found their gold; but for a thousand years the Dards have been a broken subject race, the secret of the gold has been lost, and their gold-seeking has become a vague tradition. And since their day, to the best of our belief, not another soul has visited the Buka Magna.

'You know what the Northern Tibetan Chang is like—from the Karakorum to the Ara Tag it is a vast uninhabited upland formed by the ridges and valleys of the Kuen Lun, where the bottom of the lowest valley is sixteen thousand feet above the sea, and the best-found caravan dies off like flies from starvation and exposure. Inhabitants there are none, save for the bands of wandering yak-hunters and gold-seekers who hang upon its outer fringe. And how many explorers have passed through the Northern Chang? Duotreuil de Rhins—Wellby—Sven Hedin; they managed to get through, but they about complete the list, and not one of them went near our Buka Magna. That is still a white spot on the map.

'So the Buka Magna is our goal, and we are both confident that we shall find there that lost Tibetan gold whose fame has made such a stir in history. Weismann pictures a greater Moravian Mission, endowed with ample funds, extending from Khotan to Kashgar. I see myself a man of means, living like a gentleman in the home of my fathers.

'The Indian Government, of course, keeps the Tibetan frontier closed against all Europeans, so I have got Chinese passports for both of us valid for Turkestan, and nominally we are bound for Khotan. We mean to start by the route taken by the old Forsyth Mission to Yakub Beg at Kashgar—that is, we shall start north up the Kugrang Tsampo and over the Karakorum by the Chang Lung La, but when we reach the uninhabited wastes

of the Aksai Chin beyond, and no one can stop us any more, then we shall turn due east into Tibet and head for the Buka Magna. By our route it will be a march of some sixty days, so, starting at the beginning of May, if all goes well we should be back in Leh by October. Two months in the Buka Magna should be ample, for we count on finding the gold in some readily obtainable form—probably in very rich alluvial deposits—and we are going well prepared for simple "placer" work. You see, it stands to reason that the Dards travelled very light, and used only the most primitive methods of extraction.

'And the "Keepers of the Gold"—who were they? for that there was some malign influence at work against the gold-seekers I cannot doubt. Were they merely these roving bands of Tangut robbers, ever the scourge of Northern Tibet, or can a race of giant ants in truth exist there after all? That explanation seems beyond belief; and yet, why not? Herodotus, Megasthenes, and the rock-picture of Spadum—there must be some foundation for their tale. Moreover, if you but go into any Dard village to this day, they will tell you twenty tales of gold-digging ants; and folk-lore always stands upon a strong foundation. In that far-off empty land, who can tell that we may not find the ants of Herodotus, living unknown to-day as the okapi and the takin lived till yesterday, and as—some think—the giant sloth still lives in Patagonia? After all, Pliny told us that Hanno of Carthage had found the gorilla two thousand years ago, but—till he was discovered again by Thomas Savage—how many of us were there that credited his existence? I believe that the local conditions on the Tibetan steppes may well have evolved throughout the ages a giant species to prey upon the field-mice, the marmots, and the antelope that everywhere abound—a giant race of ants forgotten for a thousand years.

'And what a foe such an ant would be. Think of the black ant we know in India, with all his savagery and blind courage, and magnify him some thirty times. No animal in the world could stand against him.

'But whoever the Keepers of the Gold may be, or if they do exist, in three months' time at most Weismann and I shall know.'"

Rowland ceased reading. "That is all," said he, "and I really did not know what to make of it, for it seemed the maddest sort of treasure-hunt, and Kenway was the last man I should ever have accused of madness. Old Weismann too, I thought he was above filthy lucre, but then apparently he wanted it only to extend his Mission. In the end I made up my mind to pull their legs properly for them when they came back, and then more or less forgot all about them.

"It must have been about mid-September that the treasure-hunters were recalled very

forcibly to my mind. One morning as I was sitting in my office in Leh I was told that a man had just ridden in with an urgent letter for me. I had him in at once and found that he was a Tibetan from the western end of the Panggong, with a letter from the Governor of Rudok, the adjoining Tibetan province. I had the letter translated; after the usual compliments, the gist of it was that an unknown European had just been brought in to the Governor at Rudok town. This European had been found desperately ill, wandering alone in Northern Rudok, and the Governor was having him moved towards the Border as carefully as possible; but it was feared that he might die before he reached there, so I was asked to come out myself to meet the party. I could read between the lines that there was something peculiar in the case, and concluded that the local authorities were in mortal dread of the anger of the Devashang—the supreme council of Lhassa—in case the European's death within their jurisdiction should lead to awkward questions from the British Government.

"It immediately struck me that Kenway or Weismann must be the European referred to, for there was no other party out that could possibly have strayed into that part of the world; but if it were either of them, then why was he alone?—it looked bad. I decided to start at once, and as there was no doctor then in Leh, I had to go alone. It took me about a week to the Panggong, and there a guide met me to take me to the sick man, who had been brought to a point some twenty miles away on the south shore of the lake. There I found the usual Tibetan camp and went to the largest of the tents, which, so two or three Tibetan soldiers lounging outside told me, belonged to the Deputy-Governor of Rudok. At that moment a smooth-faced, foxy-looking individual of about thirty appeared from within—it was the Deputy-Governor himself. He ushered me into the tent, where, after the usual ceremonies, I found myself seated on a numdah to discuss the object of my mission with him.

"There and then I took an instinctive dislike to the Deputy-Governor—a sly deprecating ruffian, who, like the late Mr Kilmansegg of immortal memory, indulged to excess in that horrid trick of 'washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water'—certainly the only use he ever made of either of those commodities. One felt him to be pre-eminently capable of that emotionless cruelty of the yellow man which is incomprehensible to the honest brutality of the Caucasian. He rejoiced apparently in the name of Stag Tsang—the Tiger Lord—but he was altogether so excessively 'umble' that I felt that I had known him since childhood—a Tibetan edition of Uriah Heap to the life.

"I gathered from Uriah that the European was in a tent close by. A few weeks earlier he had appeared—as though dropped from the clouds—on the fringe of the inhabited districts near the Aru Tso, where, by the merest chance, he had been picked up by one of those notorious robbers of Amdo and Nakktsong, ever a thorn in the flesh of authority. This particular robber—by name Tesshi—appears, however, to have been heartily sick of his trade, for he looked on this find of his as a heaven-sent chance to make his peace with the powers-that-be. So he brought the stranger to Rudok as a peace-offering. Alas, poor simple Tesshi—he had reckoned without Uriah, and his well-laid scheme for reformation was to come to nought, for my friend dismissed him with the brief remark, 'His sins were very many, so he died next day.'

"This summary justice, however, in no way helped to elucidate the identity of the stranger, who was in the last stages of collapse from wounds and exhaustion: the Tibetans were completely at a loss, and finally it was decided to send for me. The sick man had since grown steadily worse, and Uriah expected him to die at any moment, so he was heartily glad that I had appeared to relieve him of responsibility.

"The Tibetans escorted me across to the sick man's tent, a small blanket affair close by. Within, on a heap of numdahs and sheepskins, bearded, emaciated, and incredibly filthy, lay the figure of a man. It was Kenway, but a very different Kenway from the man that I remembered. I had to look many times before I was certain of his identity, and could hardly bring myself to believe that this wild-eyed skeleton, coated in filth, was in reality the friend whom I had known. My entry roused him from a stupor, and he greeted me with incoherent babblings. I did what I could to soothe him till the arrival of my men and baggage, and then carried him over to my tent: he weighed no more than a child. There we washed him and put him to bed. We found a terrible open wound in his left leg; all the muscles of the calf had been torn away as though with a pair of giant pincers, and since had shrunk and atrophied. Septicæmia was far advanced, and it was a wonder that he had not died long since. I cleaned the wound, and dressed it as well as I could with corrosive; the Tibetans had been applying compresses of fresh yak's-dung to it. Kenway was delirious the whole time; obviously his only possible chance was complete rest, so there was no choice but to stay where we were.

"Kenway lived for three days without ever once recovering his reason, and during the whole of that time I hardly quitted his bedside. Hour after hour as he tossed in his delirium he talked of all that he had been through. Never shall I forget these

days, and the scene is graven on my memory. Through the open tent-door there showed a sweep of bare grey foreshore, stretching down to the waters of the Panggong—those lifeless waters, incredibly blue and bitter as brine—while across the lake, sheer and precipitous, rose the barren brick-red hills of the Southern Changchenmo. Not a movement, save where a wandering dust-devil raised a momentary puff of whirling sand; not a sound from without, save ever and anon the far-off whistling cries of the Tibetan yak-drovers. Tibet, that unkind land of Arctic cold and blinding hail—no matter how she may have flouted us, she yet holds us all in thrall, all who have known her. One and all we cherish the fond hope of returning to her some day, to hear again the wild music of the snow-cock as he sweeps downwards from the crag to greet once more the mighty Father of All Sheep as he stands at gaze upon the brow.

"And, by my side, throughout these days, rose the dry husky whisper of the dying man—hour after hour. Gradually, from his oft-repeated wanderings, I seemed to piece together a coherent tale—the offspring of a fevered brain to be believed or discarded, as you will. This is how it ran:—

'Not a living thing for the last three days—Weismann. Not an antelope—not even a marmot. I don't like it—the whole country's deserted. . . .

'And these paths that we keep coming on—hard-beaten narrow paths—they must be game-paths—yet there isn't any game. . . .

'My God! Did you hear that cry? Was it a horse or a man? Wake up! Wake up!—Weismann—how damnably dark it is!—and the cold!

'Mahomed! Mahomed! Why doesn't the fellow answer? The men's tent empty and the horses gone? They can't have left us—they can't have!

'All but your horse and mine—it's the end of everything. . . .

'Look!—Weismann, look!—that gravel in the shallows—there's gold there—masses of it. We've found the gold!—we've found the gold—but what use is it to us now?

'My God!—what's that? Look, there—coming over the rocks above you—the Keepers of the Gold!

'Run! Weismann, run!—back to the horses—faster! man, faster!—Weismann's down—they've got him!—God! how he screams. . . .

'I must go back to him—my ice-axe crushes them like paper—faugh!—the yellow matter that squirts out and the sickening smell of musk!—but more keep crowding up—one has got me by the leg—his body's crushed to pulp, but still his pincers hold. . . .

'Weismann moves no more—he's dead—a black heaving mass of ravening tearing bodies! It will be my turn next—back to the horses!—I must get back—it's my only chance. . . .

'But to desert Weismann—the horror of it and the shame—but I could have done no good—he was dead, I swear he was dead—I swear it. . . .'

"Such were the oft-repeated ravings to which I listened; and on the third day Kenway died. What do I make of it? Well, I hardly know. The Tibetans say that the party must have been lost from starvation in the Chang, and that of course is the rational explanation—or else that they were set upon by Tesshi's gang of robbers and wiped out, all save Kenway. Of course I reported the whole affair to headquarters, giving the Tibetan version and my own suspicions regarding Tesshi. But Kenway and Weismann had entered Tibet against the express orders of Government; so naturally that august body declined to take any action in the matter, and accepted the Tibetan story without question.

"Still, somehow I feel that there is more behind, and that neither of those explanations satisfies me; for sometimes I seem to hear again that husky whisper telling of unbelievable horrors in an unknown land—that whisper to which I listened for three long days beside the Panggong Tso. And a scene rises before me: I see a barren empty land of vast expanses, of rolling shale-slopes and grey rounded hills—the Home of the Winds and the Roof of the World—rising in the north to a culminating gable of massed snows. In the foreground there lies a snow-fed stream, and an icy wind is blowing from the snows. Not a sound breaks the silence, save the hoarse croak of the Tibetan sand-grouse as he wings his way to water; not another living thing moves in the landscape; but over all there broods a sense of sinister expectancy.

"And then, all at once along a path I see a hurrying stream of squat black forms appear, relentless as death and hideous as a nightmare. It is the army of the Keepers going out on a foray.

"And by the stream something white gleams in the sunshine—I know it for the clean-picked skeleton of a man."

THE ODYSSEY OF BRIG X.

BY FRANK H. SHAW.

III.

ALTHOUGH Brig Y was the later commissioned ship, her skipper, according to that sacred volume, the Navy List, which is the Navy's Bible, was considerably senior to our man; and that all things might be as they were in Nelson's glorious days, he was to assume supreme command of any operations that might transpire. He had not as yet seen a submarine at anything like close quarters, whereas Allan was growing contemptuous of the craft.

The prearranged signal for opening fire, in the event of action arising, was that the C.O. of Brig Y should hang his shirt—a spare one, *bien entendu*—on his ship's main-boom. Until that signal was flown we were ordered to hold our own fire on pain of death or worse.

For many days we cruised about after that, and disappointment was all we secured. Sailing alone, we had met with a fair amount of luck; but now, in company, we watched fruitlessly for sight of a periscope, or anything that should give us evidence that submarines were active in these waters.

We certainly picked up frequent "alles"; we got wirelessed reports that this ship and the other had been sunk; we discovered that the big through-convoys from Port Said to Gibraltar, and *vice versa*, were losing ships with monotonous regularity; but though we journeyed to Kaso Straits and Kithera Channel, though we slugged tediously about in the vicinity of the Doro Channel, and went everywhere, in fact, where a U-boat might be encountered, the luck failed us.

About this time, too, rumours crept through that Italy was suffering heavily in the war. The Piave disaster had been a startler, and general opinion aboard us—dependent as it was on scant messages through the ether, and not all of those picked up correctly—was that Italy would throw her hand in at an early date and make the best terms she could for herself. In that event, our period of usefulness would at once come to an end, because it was only by favour of the Italian authorities that we were permitted to masquerade as Italian coasters.

Such trifling information as we could secure concerning the fortunes of our own armies was anything but reassuring. I don't wish to suggest even for a moment that anything at all approaching a "rot" set in aboard; but the tone of our discussions grew somewhat pes-

simistic, and the part we were endeavouring to play in the great game appeared an insignificant and somewhat futile one.

Still, it was no use growling: we exerted ourselves to keep the men interested and amused, and found them intelligently resolved to make the best of things, whether we were lying sluggishly becalmed for days at a stretch, or whether we were sheltering under Scarpanto from the vigorous gales that occasionally troubled us.

And after much waiting an opportunity presented itself. Still cruising in company with Brig Y, a submarine was reported at daybreak, and we went as briskly as might be to action stations. The submarine completely ignored our own ship, probably deciding that we were too trifling a fabric to be worthy of attention, and concentrated her efforts on Brig Y.

We were relegated to the position of spectators. Because of the seniority of Brig Y's C.O., it was not incumbent on us to do a single thing until we received orders: the hands were in readiness for whatever might happen, and for once in a while we were able to take in undisturbed impressions of what was happening.

The submarine lobbed two shell in quick succession ahead and astern of Brig Y. The big brig — she measured two hundred tons — seemed to be literally enveloped in upthrown spouts of water. She looked particularly helpless and sorrowful, especially when she threw her fore-yards aback and lowered away her abandon-ship boat. In the position in which we ourselves were we could have opened fire with a remarkably good chance of destroying Fritz; but orders were orders, and though we strained our eyes to see the shirt of Brig Y's skipper appear on the main-boom, we did so in vain. Afterwards, when comparing notes, it transpired that he had clean forgotten the appointed signal in the rush of events. But we were not to know that.

Brig Y, hauling her wind in order to stop her way and lower her boat, was well ahead on our weather bow. We ourselves, hugging the wind, although not stopped, and with no immediate intention of lowering a boat, were naturally to leeward of our consort. The U-boat was at an acute angle to both of us. The best explanation that can be given without a diagram is that Brig Y and ourselves formed the base of a triangle, of which the submarine was the apex. Her range at this time was about two thousand yards, and she was well out of the water. Had the two ships brought every available gun to bear, as they could have done under those circumstances, the U-boat would have been subjected to a rain of shell from five guns. But the C.O. of Brig Y was adhering closely to his instructions. He had sent away his panic party; it was necessary to pretend that his ship was abandoned. The submarine was firing steadily, though

with somewhat indifferent aim, and from our post of vantage we could see the enemy shell falling wide of Brig Y. Walker —the C.O.—evidently decided to lure on the hostile craft until he was sure of hitting to kill. He therefore set off a smoke-box aft, to give the impression that a hit had been registered, and permitted his command to fall away before the wind. In doing so his bow pointed straight towards Brig X; and before we could do anything Brig Y had almost run us down.

"For God's sake, Walker, open fire; we've got him cold!" shouted Allan at the top of his voice; but, so far as we could gather, Walker heard nothing of it. He carried on; we dodged him, and went on, awaiting orders to open fire.

The fortune of war was against us. It may be that Fritz suspected something fishy; he plastered the sea about Brig Y with shell, throwing up huge gouts of foam-topped water, failing to hit; and then suddenly broke off the action, submerged, and disappeared.

Before we could exchange compliments, orders came through by wireless from the Base, ordering us back to refit and replenish, and instructing Brig Y to take another beat. We therefore parted company, and in the course of a few days we of Brig X were snugly in port.

The brig was handed over to the shipwrights and riggers in the naval dock; and to live aboard her under the conditions attendant on refitting was frankly impossible. No depot ship was provided as a rendezvous for "Q" boats; the men were drafted into the naval barracks ashore, and we officers were instructed to secure such accommodation as was available—no easy matter —in hotels in Valetta.

Proposals were put forward suggesting that Brig X should be equipped with a 4-inch gun in lieu of one of her 12-pounders; but the minute size of the vessel precluded this possibility, though our armament was added to by the providing of a depth-charge-throwing howitzer, designed by an engineer-commander of the Royal Navy, and which, although anything but graceful in appearance, promised to be extremely effective. By its means a charge of some three hundred pounds of T.N.T., supplied with a hydrostatic fuse that was actuated by water pressure, and that could be adjusted to explode at varying depths, could be thrown a distance of some eighty yards or so in any required direction. In view of the fact that enemy submarines were constantly growing more wary, and evincing a lack of desire to attack on the surface, where they showed themselves as targets for gun-fire, depth-charges were very necessary if successful results were to be obtained.

It was somewhat strange how slowly the naval mind adapted itself to the constantly changing conditions of warfare afloat. We iconoclasts of the Naval Reserve argued that there was "too much Nelson"

about the Navy; the senior officers could not get away from the gun-duel theory, although guns, as fitted, were totally inadequate to deal with underwater craft that could submerge completely within twenty-five seconds or less of receiving an alarm. Even thus late in the war, when the submarine had shown its potentialities of attacking under the surface, an almost meticulous attention was paid to gunnery, whilst the practice of attack by depth-charge was consistently overlooked.

Guns had settled the question of British supremacy afloat in 1805, said we malcontents, and, so far as the evidence went, guns were expected to repeat the process in 1918.

That is, so far as the British naval administration was concerned. We found a different opinion prevailing amongst the leading officers of the U.S. Navy. A light squadron of submarine hunters had been based on Malta shortly after the entry of the United States into the war, and it was our good fortune to come across a considerable number of the officers commanding the mosquito craft that were designed to "put the wind up" the Hun. We found them, to a man, cleansed of the gunnery shibboleth, but enthusiastic about the possibilities of the depth-charge.

Each of the U.S. chasers carried a minimum of fifty depth-charges, and the officers commanding the waspish craft had undergone a thorough comprehensive training in attack.

We "Q" boat men, being keen as mustard still, despite the meagreness of our offensive equipment, rather set ourselves out to tap the brains of these enthusiastic U.S. naval officers, who seemed to us to be entering the great game with a ruthless determination to win a complete and abiding success. We learnt much about the mannerisms of Fritz when engaged upon his unlawful occasions, and the more we pondered over the matter the more convinced we became that guns were almost obsolete, except that they bore the same relation to anti-submarine warfare as did the executioner's knife to his axe. They were all very well to finish off a submarine with, but it was essentially necessary that Fritz should first be brought to the surface.

Bearing this in mind, we agitated for still more depth-charges and depth-charge-throwers, and it is quite on the cards that we might have got them, but that a battleship arrived in the Royal Dockyard for overhaul and refit after rooting at her moorings for many months; and as, according to the Navy's immutable laws, even a depot ship must refit periodically, all minor work was set aside and the attentions of the dockyard staff were concentrated on the big fellow. In course of time the battleship returned to her moorings, polished to the *n*th degree, with self-filling

lavatory basins fitted in all her flats, and her engines in a state of perfection; whilst we of Brig X had to content ourselves with one depth-charge-thrower. We tried to borrow a junior surgeon from the battleship—she carried quite a number—but this mercy was denied us, not even a surgeon-probationer of the R.N.V.R. was forthcoming.

During our stay in port we found, too, that a slight change had come over our general administration. Prior to this date the "Q" brigs had been the definite charge and care of a commander, R.N.R., a man practised in the handling and capabilities of sailing-vessels, a practical seaman, and a man with ideas; but during our last absence our Commander (B.) had obtained permission to proceed to sea in the latest of the brigs. His task of overseeing our welfare and efficiency was relegated to an engineer-lieutenant-commander of the Royal Navy, who had not had a wide experience in the management of sailing-vessels.

There was one result obtaining from this transfer of responsibility: there was nothing whatsoever wrong with our auxiliary engines, although we found it somewhat difficult to explain the need for so much rope and canvas as we required—destroyers not creating a wasteful expenditure in these materials under normal conditions!

Finally, with a full complement of stores and ammunition, with our crew vacancies made good, and with our brains seething with the new hints we had acquired from a hundred differing sources, we proceeded to our training station for gunnery trials, prior to proceeding afresh on our quest.

Nothing remarkable occurred during our firing practice, except that our gun-layers proved again their qualifications. The target—a six-foot square of canvas lashed to boat-hook staves fixed to a raft—was towed out to sea and dropped, and the brig manœuvred as though in presence of a submarine. When the target was 1800 yards distant, the word was given to bring the guns up and open fire. Within nine seconds of the order being transmitted two hits had been obtained in a twelve-inch bull—that is to say, the two guns were got up, trained, and fired in nine seconds, and the two hits resulted. Not bad shooting, and it promised well for ultimate success, if only Fritz would continue to play the game according to old standards.

We started forth in high spirits enough, because the reports of sinkings were coming in with ever-growing frequency; but it seems reasonable to believe that we were considered as too unimportant for Fritz's attentions. Days and weeks went by without our seeing so much as the feather of a periscope. Wreckage in plenty we sighted: grim, heart-rending evidence enough of Hunnish activity. Once we sighted a floating and much-mutilated corpse, which

we disposed of with all decency, by lashing a round-shot to its feet and reading the Burial Service over it; but for all signs to the contrary the U-boat had ceased to exist as a menace to Allied shipping.

It may be that our beat was ill-chosen, though we frequented parts of the sea that had earned a sinister history on account of enemy depredations. Our instructions were to work round a triangle, having as its corners Cape Marritimo, Bizerta, and Pantellaria. This caused us to navigate the Malta and Skerki Channels, where sinkings were uncommonly frequent; but there was one factor which mitigated against our success. We were in the main a wind-driven vessel, and during practically the whole of this tour we were subjected to considerable gales, which gave us a speed considerably beyond the ordinary, and somewhat detracted from our ostensible reason for using those waters—that reason being that we were a coaster visiting various ports for short periods only. Because of the wind's strength we could not work up to our allotted ports, and as a result we went careering madly round and round the triangle, with the brig rolling and pitching so heavily that, even had we sighted a submarine, we could not have engaged it with even the remotest hope of success.

North of the Skerki Bank we found ourselves mixed up with a thunderstorm of more than common violence. The thunderstorm, *qua* thunderstorm, was purely disagreeable; we had opportunity to reflect upon our unsheltered depth-charges and our all too vulnerable magazines when the vivid lightning was streaking perilously close to our masts; but just as the storm had spent its primary violence, we were treated to a sight that might well have formed a subject for an Academy picture to be entitled: "Saviours of the World."

A welter of murky cloud overhung the eastern sky so thickly that it appeared a solid thing reaching up from the invisible horizon to the zenith. In the main this cloud-mass was black, though shot with an ugly yellow by here and there where the sun caught it. The western half of the sea-scape was emerging into brightness, for it was only early afternoon; and the western horizon was vivid with many colours, and beautiful enough to bring a hungry suggestion to the hearts of the beholders. Purple, red, gold, and saffron, with bright blue crowning all, the colours mixed and changed, until, sheer across the bulk of the eastern cloud-bank, there showed a monstrous rainbow, a perfect arch, as clearly defined as if drawn by human hands. Some atmospheric freak caused the clouds beneath the rainbow to thin and pale, until the effect was that of a gigantic gateway leading from the infernal regions to the promise of a better world. And then, as we watched, marvelling at

nature's incomparable stage-set, the performers arrived.

It was a great homeward-bound convoy of full-powered merchant ships, steaming in orderliwise upon their lawful occasions. Great ships, the finest of their type, perhaps, to be seen in all the world at that date: not slim ladylike liners crowded with passengers and troops, but big weight-carrying freighters, laden scupper-deep with food for a hungry land. Ship by ship, and line by line, they stormed impetuously out of the sinister darkness, and each ship, emerging from beneath that archway, was gathered into the sun's kindly embrace and dewed from truck to white-crested water-line with golden light. Blue-funnelled boats from China and the Straits; Anchor Liners from Indian ports, City Liners, B.I.'s—there seemed no end to that stately procession of power. In and out, shepherding them with the ceaseless vigilance and activity of sheep-dogs, ran nimbly the escorting destroyers and sloops: trivial, waspish craft by comparison with the great bottoms they guarded.

Ship by ship they steamed statelily on, zigzagging with the precision of a battle-fleet at exercise; and each ship as she passed us, wallowing wetly there, flung to the strenuous breeze the smoke-stained Red Ensign that bespoke her nationality. Into the dancing welter of white-capped sun-kissed blue water they passed, twenty-seven in number, and every ship the worth of a king's ransom, every ship, too, the potential target for an enemy torpedo. But they went on defiantly, though every man aboard each one must have known full well the dangers that were everywhere. Why, even we, a dishevelled under-canvased trader, might well have been merely a screen for a submarine lurking behind our inconsiderable bulk. Every fragment of floating wreckage, every neglected packing-case that remained above water, might have provided cover for the sneaking periscope of an enemy craft; but though those responsible for the safe navigation of the merchantmen well knew that orders had been issued by the High Commands of the Central Powers to ignore the escorting war-vessels and confine their murderous attentions to the big-bellied cargo-carriers, they showed no suggestion of panic or unmanly hesitation. On each ship's poop were clustered the crew of her defensive gun; keen eyes were everywhere, and we, who had talked with and known the men who manned them, knew that high courage welled in their honest hearts.

Handsome tribute has been paid to the worth of our Mercantile Marine's services in the war, and every atom of praise that has come that service's way has been amply earned. There are even some who say the acclaiming trumpets have not been blown loudly enough; and here and there I have met men who hold the Merchant Service has been unjustly treated in the matter of

honours; but this I do aver, that no meed of praise could be too great and no honour too high for the unassuming men who bridged the seas undaunted, that the hungry mouths of Britain might not clamour in vain for food.

Britain owed her ultimate victory in the war to men who had, prior to the war, been treated with contempt and ignominy.

Men of sixty and sixty-five years of age were not uncommon under the Red Ensign, nor were boys of fourteen to sixteen. And every ship that entered or left an Allied port throughout the war was a target for enemy activity; she had, at one time or other during each voyage, to pass through a danger-zone. Close on 20,000 British merchant seamen paid the ultimate penalty for their loyal work, dying as merchant seamen; and it is not on record that conscription was necessary to fill up the rapidly depleted ranks. And, in addition, the Merchant Service contributed something like 15,000 commissioned and warrant officers, to say nothing of men, to the Royal Navy. In destroyers, mine-sweepers, "Q" boats, and the hundred and one various craft that came into being on account of the war, Merchant Service officers predominated.

Our exultation aboard Brig X at sight of that gallant convoy may be understood. But our presence was not exactly understood, for as we rolled and wallowed and shipped green water, a tempestuous convoy sloop broke away from the escort in response to a flag-signal from the S.N.O., and made towards us at a great pace.

We were given to understand quickly that we were an object of suspicion, for in addition to the challenging signal that climbed up the sloop's signal mast, her forward 4·7 gun trained itself exactly upon us. Of course, we should not have done it, but we did.

"Let's pull his leg a bit," said the C.O. "A ship of our type isn't expected to carry the International Signal Code aboard, and any way, we're supposed to be Dagoes."

So we looked as much like Italians as we could, and the sloop drew nearer. It appeared to us that she was about to run us down, and we could see a red-faced officer on her bridge busying himself with a portentous megaphone. We ran up the Italian ensign to our peak, and made no alteration in our usual dispositions. Came then a stentorian: "Brig ahoy! What ship is that?"

Allan clapped his hands about his mouth and shouted something incoherent.

"Heave-to, or I'll sink you!" came the immediate reply, and three men tailed on to the fore-braces. The sloop swung about and ran closely alongside; we could see more than one pair of binoculars levelled in our direction.

"'Afternoon——" said Allan

amiably, as the sloop's exhaust-water laved our rail. "Coming aboard to search? We might find a drop of the right stuff in the locker if you're thirsty."

"Oh, damn it!" shouted the commanding officer of the sloop, "why didn't you answer my signal?"

"Camouflage, that blessed word camouflage!" was our answer. "There might be a Fritz watching us even now; and Fritz knows his job."

We saw everything the Royal Navy has ever thought of the Merchant Service in the face of that sloop's commanding officer as he swung his ship away ahead of us and kicked up a flurry with his propeller.

We recommenced our triangular beat, always hopeful, but doomed to everlasting disappointment. During an entire month of this patrol, there were not two days on which we could have engaged an enemy with even a remote chance of success, on account of Brig X's restlessness as a gun-platform. Finally, after enduring a surfeit of bad weather and extremely hard conditions, which were borne with excellent cheerfulness by the lower-deck personnel, we decided to put into Bizerta for water and fresh provisions. But the wind proved treacherous; we failed to beat up to the port, and were compelled to stand away for open water, because of the extreme trickiness of the navigation in those waters. In consequence we ran round the triangle yet again, and then, with more favourable weather conditions, just managed to beat up to the mouth of the swept channel; after which we furled our canvas and proceeded under engines against a tide and wind that permitted us to make one bare knot per hour.

On the night that we anchored in this African port, a German submarine sank a French merchantman by gunfire and torpedo within a mile of the course we had taken on our last patrol! The luck seemed to be running dead against us.

Having satisfied the French port authorities that we were above suspicion, we were permitted to come to moorings under shadow of the town; and, the anchor being down and the ship snugged ready for any weather that might happen our way, we made haste to go ashore and pay our respects to the Senior Naval Officer—British—of this considerable convoy port. We were cordially welcomed and given facilities for replenishing our water-tanks and food-lockers; we also contrived to pick up such news as was current concerning the war. Matters seemed much more hopeful for the Allied cause than when we left the Base; and there were even prophecies made that Bulgaria was on the point of suing for peace.

"It's the beginning of the end," said the S.N.O. "You mark my words if it isn't. There's a regular rot started in amongst the enemy Powers,

and you'll find Turkey and Austria will be the next to go."

This sounded cheerful; and on the strength of it we decided to indulge in the luxury of a Number One sized dinner ashore. Spite of the fact that the Equinoctials were out, we were satisfied that Brig X was in safe harbourage, and our minds were at ease. Not once but very many times we had discussed precisely the orgy of eating we would indulge in when once we landed back in civilisation; we had outlined many satisfying menus, and had mildly quarrelled concerning trivial details. It is strange how largely the question of eatables looms in the scheme of things when men are reduced to a rigorous dietary; and for not a few days we had been leading a blameless existence on salt pork and Navy biscuit, with very little to modify this Spartan scale. Salt pork is an excellent thing, but it is possible to have too much of it.

We received directions from the S.N.O. and fared forth to find the perfect meal. We had lost sight of the fact that French Africa was as rigidly under military law as was France herself. Not that we fared as badly as might have been expected; but the meal, though a change from our monotonous diet, failed to come up to expectations. Bizerta was not sufficiently important to own a restaurant comparable with the golden restaurant of our dreams. True, those responsible for the feeding of the multitude did their best; but even so the dinner was nothing to linger over; and as the town offered but scant attraction, we visited, under advice, the main café of the place, greeted on arrival by almost countless hordes of Arab youngsters, whose main ambition in life was to black our shoes.

"Talk about taking in one another's washing," we said; "if this place wasn't a war port the only thing for the people to do would be to shine each other's boots!" It looked like it. The popular pastime amongst the young bloods of Bizerta was to stroll down to the Café Riche, order a "sirop" or an "amer piquant," sip it leisurely on the terrace beneath the awning, and subject their footwear to the vociferous attentions of these Arab youngsters. There was very little else to do.

But the café within was well worth seeing. Never have I seen the East and the West so curiously intermingled. The place was full of light and colour and movement. Chiefest in evidence were the French Foreign Legionaries—zouaves and chasseurs in their scores.

One found his thoughts straying back to Ouida's descriptions very vividly. In such a place as this might Bert Cecil have first met Cigarette: these bronzed and reckless-looking men in scarlet and pale blue and khaki and dark blue, in gold braid and red, their close-cropped heads inevitably topped by the rakish fez; men who moved with the long slouching stride of the

horseman and the desert ranger, were precisely such spahis as filled the pages of Ouida's books; and it would not have aroused the smallest surprise in our minds had some flashing meteor of young and attractive womanhood darted into the middle of the apartment and commenced a wild fantastic dance.

But public music ceased to be in France and France's possessions during the war, so we heard no strumming of guitars or clashing of cymbals. The French held, and I think wisely, that music, whilst possessing charms of its own, occasionally serves as an inducement to prolonged sittings in the public places where drink may be indulged in; and so, with a thoroughness essentially French, the edict was issued: No music whilst France mourns her slain and tortured.

However, the varied kaleidoscope was well worth watching, despite the lack of sweet strains. A portly Arab, who might, from something rakish and reckless about his mien, have been a desert sheikh, was playing French billiards with the spick-and-span petty officer from a U.S. destroyer; a British yeoman of signals from a convoy sloop was playing dominoes with a bald-headed and heavily-bearded Turco, who, clad in robes of state, would have made an excellent model for a painting of an old-time Venetian Doge. Neither could understand a word of what the other was saying, but the game proceeded enthusiastically enough. At a marble-topped table, watching the movements, was seated a portly Tunisian native—a merchant of some importance, and one, moreover, who had made the Pilgrimage—and a good stiff cognac-and-seltzer was at his elbow, whilst he puffed enjoyably at one of those flashily varnished, silver-mounted pipes which may be seen in any English tobacconist's window. He had hitched up the slack of his baggy breeches, this venerable Arab, to reveal somewhat startling silk socks, clocked in contrasting colours, and held in place by the latest thing in suspenders!

There were slim French naval men, talking at the rate of nineteen to the dozen, hob-nobbing with British blue-jackets over practically harmless beer, and swearing everlasting friendship. There were Russian officers not a few, and big beefy-looking Serbs, for the shattered remnants of the Serbian Army had been transported to this neighbourhood for reconstruction. Every single white man, save ourselves, was in uniform, as were most of the coffee-coloured habitués; and by far the greater majority of the French officers and men wore rows on rows of decorations as sign and proof of the work they had done for France during the war. In amongst the many tables, skirting the extended elbow of some vacant-faced recruit to the Legion, who was laboriously inditing a letter, exchanging words of greeting with Frenchman, Briton, Russ,

and Serb alike, flitted the immaculately-attired waiters—in evening dress, no less; whilst from without came the everlasting cries of the street gamins, shaven of head and pert of manner; and by looking through the windows into the wonderfully moonlit night could be seen the towering spire of a chaste minaret. Yes, it was an incongruous stage-set enough; and we of Brig X, attired as befitted our ostensible occupation, must have presented a discordant note in the general colourful *mise en scène*.

It may be that long weeks of narrow environment and somewhat rough conditions had given the contrast an added value, but to my mind that boiling, bubbling café in Bizerta is one of the most picturesque sights I have ever seen.

It made me wonder somewhat why our own British social life could not be arranged on similar lines. The habitués of the café were quite content to sit and watch the colour and movement: two glasses of thin beer as innocuous as soda-water amply satisfied their hankerings for refreshment. Our own men, when they trooped in—a nondescript horde enough—fitted themselves into the picture with that remarkable adaptability possessed by the British seaman, and seemed thoroughly contented with their lot. There was not the smallest suspicion of drunkenness anywhere, there was no unseemly brawling. But I remembered a night in Devonport of a very different cast, with the naval piquets extremely busy in rounding up intoxicated bluejackets, with the Flagstaff Steps crowded with a blasphemous fighting assortment of drink-mad humanity, who were blind and deaf to all ideas of reason or decency. Lacking the brightness of the café, the crews of various warships had been compelled to seek relaxation in the only places where it might be found, the unattractive public-house bar, where drinking was the only business encouraged, and a man was welcomed more for the length of his purse than for any other reason.

They closed the café at an early hour. There were no French piquets to shepherd the Legionaries to their big gaunt barracks on the hillside; the men walked straightly home, and the streets did not echo to yelled choruses of indecency.

"We think we're the salt of the earth," we told ourselves; "but there's quite a lot we could learn yet—in spots.

Here in Bizerta we happened upon the French conception of a "Q" boat. It differed somewhat from ours. This "Q" was merely a fishing-boat, of some twenty tons maybe, officered and manned by a petty officer and half a dozen matelots. By way of armament she carried a sawn-off *soixante-quinze* amidships, roughly camouflaged by a ragged tarpaulin. But she had already two Fritzes to

her credit, definitely scuppered by close-range gun-fire after heated and gallant actions. We envied whilst we wondered. Hearing the Frenchmen's stories, we felt much the same as does the angler, with his expensive, ultra-perfect outfit, who fishes for a week without result, whilst watching the country urchin pull two-pound trout in monotonous succession from a stream with no better aids than a willow wand and a bent pin!

The weather broke, and Brig X promptly dragged her moorings in the blackness of a howling night of storm. We decided we were getting fed-up with port life, and as soon as opportunity offered went to interview the S.N.O. of the port for permission to proceed to sea. He gave us orders to return to the Base as best we thought fit, but he also mentioned that a hostile submarine had been reported as active on the Skerki Bank. It was far from being suitable weather for naval action in a small ship; but our longings were keener than ever, especially after our yarns with the French "Q's" people, and as the wind, though violent, was fair for leaving port, we bustled about, filled up with stores and water, and eventually weighed anchor one evening and proceeded to sea.

For many a day we cruised in the vicinity of Skerki; only once was the alarm sounded. It was still blowing fresh, and the ship was wallowing under much-shortened canvas. It was about midnight, and white water was roaming aboard us with maddening persistency. But we were so utterly fed-up with our ill-luck that we quite determined to engage, even if we had to make a muzzle-to-muzzle matter of it. We even discussed the possibility of carrying Fritz by the board. On account of the darkness there was no particular reason for us to remain under cover; we of the afterguard clustered aft by the wheel, watching the slowly approaching shadow, that was hump-backed, and very obviously carrying a wireless mast. We got the guns up very quietly, and trained them on the approaching bulk, and were on the point of opening fire and chancing it when it swung its broadside to us and revealed itself to be an antiquated French gunboat returning from patrol—a diminutive, whale-backed craft that might have passed muster for a submarine on the surface even in broad daylight.

There was nothing to do but mentally to congratulate the Frenchmen on their exceedingly narrow escape from annihilation: another minute or two must have seen our entire armament in action, even to the depth-charge-thrower; and as the range was short, it is extremely probable that the gunboat would have been blown sky-high.

Without so much as hailing us, he passed, swirling and fussing on, throwing big water over his scooping bows, and vanished into the howl-

ing blackness that was all about.

Two evenings later our wireless operator reported confused wireless signals coming along which failed to answer to any of his codes and ciphers. Our wireless was not directional; but we made it directional by the simple process of steering various courses until we discerned the signals coming with increased strength. Only an enemy submarine, we decided, could produce those incoherent signals, and we maintained a most careful look-out for long after the signals had ceased to trouble our receiving telephones.

We found proof during the ensuing day that our suspicions had been more or less correct. At first, when the object was reported, we named it for a floating oil-drum; but as we drew nearer we realised our mistake. It was an ugly German mine bobbing nastily in the 'scend of the seas—quite obviously an enemy mine-laying craft had been active laying a sinister barrier across the track of the expected Bizerta convoy. No question about it: the German secret service picked up a lot of information one way and another. But of the submarine author of the mine-laying there was nothing whatever to be seen. Our duty was obvious: we proceeded to risk our camouflage and sank the offending mine by rifle-fire; after which we waited for darkness to close down again, and transmitted a wireless signal to all concerned that mines were as likely as not present in certain indicated positions, and advising all craft to give that neighbourhood a wide berth. Whether our signals were heard and acted on we never learnt, but we had done our best to safeguard the friendly shipping that was expected.

Then, after beating about the vicinity for a little while further, more or less haphazard, just in case Fritz returned, tigerwise, to his expected kill, we shaped course by way of Pantellaria for the Base, at which we were already overdue.

The whole cruise had been fruitless: we were dejected men. "Q" boating, we decided, was a very much overrated form of amusement. Fritz, was our fervent declaration, had all his teeth in their sockets, and was too old a bird to be caught with such chaff as we were spreading for his gratification.

So far as the C.O. was concerned, he was desperately determined to attempt another brand of seafaring. After his many months in Brig X he yearned for the lost comforts of big ships. He told me that the nerve-strain was telling, and I believed him. For there was an undoubted tension on the nerves during all the time we were at sea. Actual action was less affrighting than the endless suspense and the occasional feeling of sheer helplessness when the elements were massed together in conspiracy against us. We could fight, yes; but we could neither compel action nor avoid it,

we had to take whatever was coming. And we knew that Brig X must sooner or later be outclassed. All the stories and reports we heard went to prove that enemy submarines operating in the Mediterranean were adopting a much heavier armament than anything we carried.

Consequently, on reaching the Base and making his report, the C.O. asked to be relieved from his command. This request was granted, and I was appointed to provisional command of the brig. Allan had done good work, he had been in close action far oftener than most naval officers had been during the entire course of the war, and the D.S.C. that he had earned had been well earned. Indeed, certain judges, who knew what they were talking about, declared that a Victoria Cross would have been none too small a reward for his excellent work in outwitting the wily Hun.

We found much stir and bustle at the Base. A project was afoot to administer a knock-out blow to the Turks, who, now that Bulgaria had definitely thrown in her hand, were wavering, and apparently wondering what benefit was to accrue to them from their participation in the World War. There was talk of a dramatic landing at Dedeagatch, a forlorn-hope sort of affair, and Allan, our late C.O., was promptly roped in for this adventure, so that his hopes of ease were doomed to disappointment.

Came next the news that Brig X's career of usefulness was finished. She was underarmed, and altogether unfitted to cope with the powerful submarines that were known to be operating in the waters of the Mediterranean; she was not suitable for the fitting of a heavier armament; and—there was a general feeling everywhere that the war was drawing near to its close. Our little ship, aboard which we had encountered such vicissitudes, was to be paid off, reconditioned, and returned to her original owners. The major part of her crew was to join Allan in the Dedeagatch enterprise, since well-tried men were necessary for the project; and it was deemed at Headquarters that men who had voluntarily taken upon themselves the onerous work of "Q" boating, would not be lacking when it came to desperate work ashore.

As it happened, the Dedeagatch project fizzled out more or less—which was, perhaps, just as well; because, after Turkey sued for peace and a close examination of the conditions at Dedeagatch was made, it was found that the landing meditated was foredoomed to ghastly failure, on account of the enormous strength of the fortifications.

But paid off Brig X was, and quickly. So quickly and so secretly, indeed, that there was hardly time for even the most casual of farewells; whilst the ceremony of paying-off—*some* ceremony according to

naval traditions—was curtailed to an extent that rendered it unnoticeable.

One final question arises to the mind after living over these not so distant days: were the "Q" boats worth while?

I think they were. The main fault about them all was that they came into being too late, almost at the same time as a defensive armament was granted to merchant ships. The inevitable result of this concession to a gallant and hitherto undefended service was to drive enemy U-boats under water; instead of attacking by gun-fire on the surface, they resorted to the more deadly and less answerable method of torpedo attack. But H.M.S. *Privet*, one of the most lowly of "Q's," after a long career of usefulness, during which she was in action many times and successful more than once, sank an enemy submarine two days before the Armistice was declared,—which went to show that it was occasionally possible to lure Fritz to his well-deserved doom.

In the North Sea and Atlantic "Q" boats justified their existence remarkably well, when once the slow-thinking powers realised the varying qualities of seafaring. There was a disposition at one time to send ships into waters where similar ships never worked. To find an obvious coaster zigzagging away in mid-Atlantic was sufficient to arouse the suspicions of even the most lethargic and obtuse of submarine commanders. That "Q's" were often in hot action, and that they were fought well, let the long list of naval V.C.'s tell.

So far as the Mediterranean "Q" brigs were concerned, they certainly justified their coming into being, although they would have been infinitely more effective had they embarked earlier on their camouflaged career. But one, and perhaps the main, result of their activities was, that the Italian sailing coasting trade, previously completely paralysed by the ruthless depredations of enemy under-water craft, was enabled to resume; and what that meant to Italy—a country but ill-supplied with railways—history will probably tell at a future date, when all things are weighed fairly in the balance and honour is given where honour is due.

So wary of Italian coasting craft did German submarines become, that the masters of such vessels lost any hesitancy they might have had, and proceeded to sea with the utmost regularity. Every sailing-brig was a potential submarine-killer in enemy eyes; and so fleet after fleet won through the danger-zone, and kept Italy supplied with the material and stores required to snatch victory out of the jaws of impending defeat.

True, the tale of destruction was not a long one: Brig X was actually the only brig that could claim a definite victory; but the worth of a thing is estimated more by its general effect on the war as a whole than on its individual distinctions.

FROM JINJA TO REJAF.

BY ANDREW BALFOUR, C.B., C.M.G.

SOMEHOW Jinja suggests a joke. At least when you speak to any one unfamiliar with the place, he or she usually laughs and says "Jinja—how do you spell it?" Yet Jinja is far from being a joke on a still hot night when there is a steep hill to climb and the mosquitoes are busy. Then, indeed, one is apt to wish that the bungalows were not so far above the little pier which thrusts out into the still waters of the great Victoria Nyanza.

Very different, however, is the feeling when you step forth from the door of one of these same bungalows into the fresh morning air and gaze abroad and around you. The lower part of the hill trends so steeply to the lake that the landing-place is tucked away beneath it and so invisible, but in any case the stranger has no eye for such a prosaic sight as a wooden wharf and a trim screw steamer. Nay, rather the eye seeks the glittering waters of Napoleon Gulf with the high forest-clad island in the foreground and roams along the varied coast-line from east to west, the while the mind is busy with vistas of the past.

Yonder is Uganda, from which the murdering hordes of the savage Mtesa were wont to swoop upon Usoga. Jinja has witnessed many battles and much cruelty and bloodshed in the past. One of its sights is the ancient tree sheltering the stones whereon the victims of the cruel despot of Uganda yielded up their lives to the knife or spear. Now, white children play around it and doves harbour in its branches. Indeed, the whole of the residential part of Jinja is very peaceful. It is a garden town. Each bungalow has its compound, hedge-surrounded, full of flowers and shrubs. The roads are wide and in parts lined by a very beautiful solanaceous tree, with white and purple blossoms like those of the potato, but infinitely more magnificent. The open ground is carpeted by coarse grass, for the whole brae-face has been cleared and is now a verdant slope, steep but pleasant to the eye. The place is peaceful, lulled as it were to sleep by a distant lullaby of rushing waters; for even by day the ear catches a faint murmuring from the west, while at night, to the houses on the verge of the links, there rises on the air a continuous swishing sound, the song of the Ripon Falls, softened by distance but attractive to the ear as the first noise of rain in a dry and thirsty land.

Let us step forth upon these links, links where golf is played industriously upon a short grass; open downs studded here and there by single trees,

a fine free stretch provided with all necessary hazards, though it is the opposite bank which rejoices in a name that somehow seems designed to suit a place where the golf ball bounces—the name Bugungu. The sward slopes gently to the west, to the gorge where the Nile has its birth, where it leaps into being amongst black rocks and spray and cormorants and countless fish; where, gliding from the mighty lake, it gathers force and impetus; where, penned between high banks, it takes a river's form, and encountering the first of its many barricades plunges over and across it; and, 300 yards in width, sweeps and swirls and gurgles to the north, a mighty mass of foam-flecked water.

It is a wonderful sight, this birthplace of the Nile, wonderful as viewed from the heights of Busoga, now free of forest, but once the haunt of the dreaded tsetse fly—perhaps more wonderful close at hand. From above one gazes across the air space to the Kingdom of Uganda, to a lofty bank, in part cleared, in part shaggy with virgin forest. Here of an evening the lordly water-buck with his harem may be seen stealing to the river's edge, where the crocodile lies in wait. Here also at times the western sky is full of the most wondrous hues, from burnished gold and salmon pink to a blood red which might have warmed the hearts of Mtesa and his accursed son.

Below, in the rock barricade, one marks the clefts through which the river pours; the intervening islets green and feathered with vegetation, dark in contrast to the snowy patches of broken water, of bubble-sprinkled foam. South of the Falls the stream is placid, fringed here and there with reeds, a broad expanse dotted at times by the heads of hippos, stretching away till it merges with the lake and reaches the spot where the ferry plies from shore to shore. North of the Falls the prospect is superb as viewed from the hill slope. The eye follows the valley down which the huge river hurries, bordered by great forest trees, seamed here and there by rocky fangs and ledges, streaked with white, widening into bays and backwaters and huge dark pools which cut into the banks, and over which hang trees where monkeys sport and fish-eagles sit motionless as statues.

Descend the steeps and sally forth upon a rocky ridge which leads to the nearest of the cataracts. I doubt if there is a more attractive spot in Africa. It is not the magnificence of the scene, for that is surpassed by a thousand places in the Dark Continent, it is not even the thought that here the Father of Waters is in process of birth, that this is the very river which, after winding through Uganda, losing itself in the reeds and marshes of Lake Choga, thundering down the chasm at the Falls of Murchison, sweeping through a lonely land to the northern siltings of Lake Albert, anon gliding thence past Wadelai and Nimule, will bring wealth and

life to the Sudan and nourish the fellaheen of Egypt. No, it is rather that there is something homelike in the place. There is a breeze blowing down the gorge, there is spray upon the face, there is the sound of running waters in the ears. The drought of Africa is gone, although the hot sun still shines. There is a kindly look about it, and moreover it is full of life. The very water seems alive. The nearest of the Falls, ay, and the middle one, and that farthest away, are no great height, perhaps 30 feet, but the rush of the stream is grand. One gets quite close to the thick gliding arch of never-ending water—water green as a beryl in its depths, white as snow where the foam flecks it, resistless water, pouring, ever pouring, into the pool below. It has a fascinating curve this liquid, hurrying mass. For how many thousand years did it thus leap the ledge before ever a white man's eye beheld it, for how many thousand years will it continue so to do ere the hard rock is worn away? It is eating into it all the time, it is ever speeding onwards, it tarries not nor rests, the song of its labour fills the air. Yes, verily the water lives.

And so does the large fish, which suddenly leaps into sight, shrouded in the cascade like a fly in amber and is hurled backwards whence it sprang. Talk of salmon-leaps! The Ripon Falls are alive with big fat barbel, all striving desperately to gain the lake. The broken water below is literally studded with their fins and broad black backs. The place is a seething mass of fish, big and little, bobbing on the surface, leaping up the water-slide, drifting down stream, dashing athwart the current—a truly marvellous sight. And, as if this was not enough, the little rock-ridges and pinnacles give foothold to sooty, greedy cormorants and long-necked darters, which take toll of the smaller leapers, and must surely never know what it is to suffer want. Get hold of a rod and a spoon-bait, and if only the sun is on the water you are likely soon to be fast in a big barbel—anything up to 20 lb.—a stout fighter if not a very sporting fish. As you stand upon a rock laved by the Nile, which at times will surge up to your boot soles, you will see the clear but agitated water of the pool chock-a-block with big brown shadows as the fish dart and drift hither and thither. It would seem impossible not to hook one by accident, and yet the perversity of the gentle art too often sends the inexperienced angler home empty-handed. Now and again he may land a siluroid, one of the ugly cat-fish of the Nile, which, however, despite its looks, is more succulent than the insipid barbel. Stages have been built to aid disciples of Izaak in their quest, but these get washed away or submerged when the Nile is high. Even so, one can do very well in the pool just at the base of the

Fall or from a ledge hard by, past which the current swirls with a power and velocity that make one marvel at the strength and agility of the fish which can face it. There is an angling club at Jinja, and interesting records have been compiled, not only as to the weight of catches but as to the habits of the fish. Some day there will be a big hotel at Jinja, and the picnicker will defile the place, and power will be taken from the Falls to light Jinja and Kampala and even Entebbe. The little railway to Namasagali will be electrified, there will be waterworks, and perhaps cotton-ginning factories—in short, the place may alter as greatly as it has altered since the days when Speke and Grant, first of all Europeans, clapped eyes upon its beauty.

The only wonder is that Jinja is not much more developed, that the great source of energy so close at hand has not been utilised. Had our American cousins owned the cradle of the Nile it would have been rocked to some purpose. Well, the time will come, for if slow-going we are sure, and, after all, there will be much to regret once Science has its way in the wilderness, even if comfort and efficiency are thereby secured.

Let us turn our backs on the river, ascend the slope, and wander past the bungalows and the Banks. We arrive at the Indian bazaar, a dull street, with little of interest in it to any one familiar with the East, and so eventually reach the very trim and tidy station which is the terminus of an offshoot of the Uganda Railway, and, curiously enough, the only part of that railway which runs in Uganda.

The train has little to commend it, and fortunately the journey is short—some seventy miles. This little stretch of line, however, taps a cotton-growing country, and is of considerable economic importance, while it has also to be watched—watched carefully for plague. Its station buildings are the best part of it. They are very trim and neat, well-built and carefully kept, rather a pleasing contrast to the tin shanties in British East Africa, though scarcely rivalling the imposing structures which the Boche was pleased to erect in what was once his territory.

The country through which the little train passes is uninteresting, for the line is some distance from the Nile, though roughly parallel to it. Everywhere is low open forest, with a carpeting of long grass. It is hot and rather dusty, so that no one grieves when the journey, which takes a good few hours, is at an end. We tumble out, and there is the Victoria Nile—a Nile which has settled down into placidity, something very unlike the boisterous river we left at Jinja. Broad, deep, and still, with an air of mystery and of impenetrable calm, it slips along through level country, its banks fringed by reeds,

only the swirling surface-eddies telling of its strength.

Namasagali—how these African names get at one!—is not a place wherein to linger, and once on the little stern-wheeler we stay there and watch the barges being fastened in one long row to the bow, so that when eventually she pushes off she suggests some kind of deformed narwhal or sword-fish with a prodigious snout nosing in front of her. It is just as well, for otherwise there would be the deuce to pay when the great *sudd* blocks of Choga hove in sight—these drifting masses of papyrus which would be only too ready to jam themselves between barge and steamer and play the part of the wait-a-bit thorn of the southern veldt.

Meanwhile, however, it is all plain sailing down a clear waterway, with nothing worse upon its bosom than the floating *Pistias*, which like tiny cabbages drift gently with the stream. A solitary hill upon the eastern bank forms a landmark in the vast plain through which we course, but it is soon left behind, and ere long, as the magical African night casts its mantle on the wilderness and a million stars shine and twinkle overhead, we slip out stealthily and very peacefully, save for the chug, chug of the dripping paddle floats, upon a wide expanse of lonely water, the bosom of Lake Choga.

Choga is scarcely a lake. It is rather a huge mere, a kind of tropical Norfolk broad, a flooding of the Nile over acres of barren land, a ponding of waters which, semi-stagnant, lend themselves to the growth and sustenance of aquatic plants, and more especially of the swamp-loving papyrus. It is curious how closely the tufted top of the papyrus resembles the plume which decks the head of the Kavirondo crane, that golden-crested bird which so often wings across vast areas abandoned to this growth. It is almost as though the crane had taken a badge from its surroundings, its black velvety pad being the rich mud where the plant sometimes finds holding ground, its shapely tuft the aigrette surmounting the plant's tall stem. It is a beautiful thing this "mop-head of the giant rush," so green its filaments, so intricate its design of delicate branching threads topped, when in flower, by tiny cones of the palest gold. If the crane sweeps over it, the busy lily trotter, hurrying across the broad flat water-leaves, the snake-necked darter, and the snowy egret harbour amongst it, but one sees few birds from the steamer's deck, few birds and fewer animals. The swamp is desolate.

A voyage upon Lake Choga is as uncertain as life itself. There is no saying when you will reach the desired haven. It all depends on the sudd, and the sudd is the devil. One passage all will be fair sailing, the next the broad water-lane has vanished, and a formidable barrier lies across the steamer's path. The navigation is no easy matter, and the delays are often irksome in the extreme. Still, being sudded is

not like being nipped by ice. It is more like being lost in a maze, and, after nosing round, one usually wins clear, though at times it may be necessary to cleave a passage with the bill-hook, the anchor, and the double-handed saw—cutting through papyrus, tearing at the tangling *Phragmites*, severing the long stems of the water-convolvulus, dislodging the floating amaranth and countless little *Pistias*. There are many crocodiles in Choga, and they may occasion unpleasant happenings. The other day—that phrase which in Africa replaces the fairy tale's "once upon a time"—the other day a dug-out with two white men and its quota of black servants and paddlers encountered one, and the crocodile paid the penalty of getting too close to civilisation. He was nine feet long, and it was no easy matter to get him aboard, but eventually he lay on the rounded bottom of the uncertain vessel, which sped upon its way urged by its ebon crew.

One of the white men occupied a camp-chair, and sat with his face towards the bows. In a dug-out such a position is a fixture till land is reached, for one can play no pranks in a hollowed tree trunk, the most cranky of craft. The other sat towards the stern, and between the two were the black men and the crocodile. Suddenly the white man in the bow realised that some commotion was taking place behind his back. There were shouts and yells, the dug-out lurched dangerously, his companion uttered a warning cry. In a momont he understood—*the crocodile had come alive.* Presumably the bullet had merely grazed its spine and stunned it. Now the shock had passed off, and the saurian was beginning to make things lively. Its tail swung viciously from side to side, its jaws opened and snapped. Some of the blacks stumbled out of its way; one, a stout fellow, crouched between its snout and the back of his master's chair. The white man could not even turn round to see what was happening, but fortunately he was a gentleman of resource, who was accustomed to travel with a knife fashioned from an old bayonet. Thanking his stars that he had it with him, he handed it back to his servant, and the plucky black, with one shrewd and powerful blow, drove the sharp steel through the monster's neck and pinned it to the wood of the dug-out. Then, with all speed, a course was shaped for land, which was reached without further misadventure. What remained of life in the crocodile was extinguished, and an adventure, which might easily have ended in tragedy, terminated happily.

The lake is full of fish on which the crocodiles feed, and here and there on islands or swampy promontories one comes upon little colonies of fishermen belonging to the Mukenzi, a tribe of the Bakenzi, the original lake-dwellers both of Choga and Kwania, the latter really a northern ex-

tension of the larger sheet of sudded water.

The natives are almost amphibious. The dug-outs in which they visit the steamer to sell their day's catch are surely the most wretched in all Africa; miserable shells, scarcely raised above water-level, leaking badly, so that when their owners are not paddling they are baling, presumably for dear life, though whether beings who navigate in such craft could possibly drown or become the prey of crocodiles is, to say the least, doubtful. They are a curious primitive folk, but it seems a deadly existence to live in nakedness amongst swamps and reeds and mosquitoes—the life of a frog and not of a man. Doubtless, however, the Mukenzi are content, which is more than most folk are, so it is no use wasting pity upon them. There is at first a strange beauty about these *sudd* regions of Africa, but it soon palls, for acres of papyrus grow monotonous unless one has visions of making paper out of them, an industry which may one day transform these vast green stretches.

We are fortunate in finding the channel next morning, and plod along hour after hour till, far ahead, a very tall and solitary palm rises against the blue sky, marking the place of disembarkation for the Lake Albert road. The palm is said to be one mentioned by Sir Samuel Baker, the place is Masindi Port, and as much like a port as is the corner of a duck-pond.

Perhaps the comparison is hardly fair, for the lake was high, and whatever landing-place exists had been submerged. As it was, the steamer anchored off a little bay flanked by reedy banks, and the passengers transferred themselves and their belongings into wobbly dug-outs, which have a wonderful holding capacity, and are well adapted for negotiating shoals and shallows. We disembark upon sundry planks, which keep the feet from being mired in the oozy slime of mud and rotting vegetation, and proceed up a slope to a spot where, opposite some tumble-down bandas, a motor-lorry is in waiting. Somehow it seems strangely out of place at Masindi Port.

The journey thence to Masindi is scarcely exhilarating. The road is red, there is bush and low forest where there are not clearings with banana groves. Here and there are hill-ranges where the prospect improves, but it is rather a mournful and monotonous landscape, this bit of Unyoro, and calls for scant notice. Black night has shrouded it long before Masindi is reached, a black night lit by countless fireflies and resonant with the rumblings of distant thunder.

Masindi, the capital, has much to commend it. For one thing, it lies in open country, in a shallow basin covered with short rough grass, and looks out on wooded hill-ranges sufficiently picturesque. For

another, it is excellently kept, a clean trim place, the official bungalows well - designed, homely and comfortable abodes, screened against the mosquito and yet pleasing to the eye. There is a little hotel in Masindi, no great shakes of a place, but better than the usual rest-house, and a very considerable native population occupies the congeries of huts which cluster amongst trees and plantains on the slopes to the south-west. A notable feature is the tower of the mission church, a pretentious red building bowered in greenery. What a change since Sir Samuel Baker's day! Yet, after all, though in mere externals Africa may change, her dark heart remains as of yore. Go into the little cemetery and you will see the tombstone of one who sought to defy superstition. He was told that if he felled a certain holy tree disaster would overtake him, but he laughed at native fears and native warnings and, possibly in a spirit of bravado, did the deed. Within a year he and all those associated with him in this impiety had vanished like the tree, and now his lonely grave is one of the sights of the station. It is at Masindi that one can obtain the interesting pottery glazed with plumbago and fashioned to resemble gourds of various shapes and sizes, attractive products of native manufacture with a beautiful jet-black lustre and very graceful outlines.

One would fain have lingered at Masindi, a hospitable spot, but even the few hours available were due to the need of repairs to the motor-lorry, and when these were completed we rolled off once more *en route* for Butiaba. The bush closed in upon the road as soon as the outskirts of Masindi were left behind, and again the journey grew monotonous until all at once weird sounds announced that everything was not well with the lorry. Far from it; for soon the ponderous vehicle was at a standstill, and her passengers, after waiting a while in vain and sending back a message for a repairer, had perforce to foot-slog it, hoping that ere night their camp outfits might reach them, and that threatening clouds would not burst before a coffee plantation was reached where there was a chance of food and shelter. The road improved as we tramped along it, for here and there clumps of mighty trees towered alongside, outliers, doubtless, of the great Budonga forest, home of the elephant and the chimpanzee.

We catch a glimpse of a colobus monkey swinging himself to earth, his white and sable livery conspicuous against the forest background, and then, somewhat suddenly, find signs of civilisation. We are in a coffee-growing country, and there are the *shambas* with their rows of pretty bushes, whereon cluster the beautiful red berries, which almost make one think of holly-trees and snow. Large tracts of the country are cultivated here, and the planters are waiting for the day when facilities will be given them for export to the

north. They are far, very far from the sea, these pioneers of Empire who have mastered the bush, but they grow good coffee and they live in hope. Like most Colonials, they are a hospitable folk, and, as usual, there are Scots among them, who can produce scones for tea and relish a tale in their native Doric. A restful night at a picturesque homestead amongst the coffee, and we are off again next morning by the resuscitated lorry. For a space we leave the *shambas* and skirt the fringe of the primeval forest, which recalls the famous High Woods of southern Trinidad. There is a dense jungle, and out of it rise tall lean trees seeking the light. There is a multitude of creepers, a riot of green growth, and the ground is covered with rotting vegetation, the decay of ages.

The forest glades are almost chilly, and the forest itself is very still. Even its clear streams are silent, slinking along amongst the undergrowth and starred in places with white flowers. Strange creatures lurk in the green depths—the man-like ape already mentioned, the giant forest hog, and little-known nocturnal ramblers. Here the elephants bear heavy tusks, and are savage from much hunting; but there is no sign of them as we lumber past their retreat.

Once more come coffee-fields, unhappily devastated by the deadly thrips, so that the once comely bushes look starved and lean and ragged, a sorry sight. But we think no more of coffee, for, away beyond, we sight a mighty mountain-range, and we know we are looking at the Belgian Congo. A little farther and at the base of the distant range gleam the blue waters of a lake. It is our first glimpse of the Albert Nyanza. Ere long we are at the end of the motor journey, for the winding road down the steep escarpment to Lake Albert is not yet ready for traffic, and so we halt upon the brink and, dismounting, look down upon the quiet stretch of waters which gladdened the eyes of Baker and his heroic wife on March 14th, 1864.

The prospect is superb, the long blue lake lying in its mountain trough, narrowing to the north, where the Bahr-el-Jebel leaves it, stretching at its full breadth of five-and-twenty miles away to the south where lies the snow-capped Ruwenzori, invisible from where we stand. About us are blocks of rough granite, and a stony path twists and twines down the hill-face to the seven miles or so of level bush-covered land which reaches out to the lake margin. Purple-grey and vast, beyond the lake, lies the Congo buttress, 7000 feet in height, and seemingly rising sheer from the Nyanza, which to-day is smooth as glass, placid as any pond. In the foreground at the lake's verge lies Butiaba: a few houses, a few huts, the port from which the steamer starts, the little white steamer which we can make out clearly with the glass, and which is called *Sir Samuel Baker*.

It is easy work swinging downhill, albeit the track is steep and rough and stony, and must try the porters who, with impedimenta upon their heads, follow us as we descend. The going is heavy amongst the sand of the alluvial flats, which are full of salt and support euphorbias and little else. Indeed, it is rather a dreary trudge, though we have the memory of a fine view to cheer us and the prospect of a bit of sport at Butiaba, where there is fishing fit for a lord.

Emerging from the scraggy bush we cross the open and find ourselves upon the verge of a kind of lagoon, an overflow from the lake, which has to be crossed in a dug-out. Thereafter we pass a few Bagaya dwellings, with their curious food stores, like beehives set on poles. Anon we come upon an Ajowa village, with yet another type of grain store, and soon reach Butiaba, a cluster of thatched huts with European houses some little distance off. At a tiny wharf lies the white paddle-steamer, smart as paint and polishing can make her. The night is spent under a hospitable roof close to the lake shore, and in the morning, ere it grows hot, two of us embark in a tiny steel dinghy with a sturdy black as oarsman, and push off, armed with a tarpon rod and the stoutest of tackle, for we are in quest of the giant Nile perch, *Lates niloticus*. It is very calm on the lake, the surface unbroken save where an otter's head cleaves the surface, as, startled by our approach, he makes for a bed of reeds. The lake is very high, and much of what was once dry land is under water. We pull slowly along such a submerged bank, from which bushes and even trees thrust upwards with bare branches, killed by the long immersion.

For a time nothing happens as, with a dead fish for bait fixed in a truly formidable apparatus of metal framework and hooks, we trawl slowly round a point.

Suddenly, however, there is a check. "A snag surely!" is the thought, for the feeling is as though one was fast to the Continent of Africa. But no! the reel spins, the line travels out faster and faster. There can be no doubt we are into a big fish. It is a wild rush, and yard after yard of stout tackle vanishes into the depths. On goes the powerful brake and the strain begins to tell. The line slackens, cautiously we reel in, the black rower pulling slowly off-shore the while, well into deep water. Then once again the reel handle whizzes as the fish dashes for freedom. Again the brake checks him, and as the line rises it is apparent that the quarry is seeking the surface. Fifty or sixty yards away he breaks it and hurls himself into the sunlight, a huge mass like molten silver, curving in the air like a leaping salmon and splashing heavily as he regains his element. He sounds and down goes the taut line, and the thick rod quivers and bends and the arms grow weary. There can be no

doubt that he is a heavy fish, a very heavy fish, and that he is fighting hard for his life. Once more the brake tells and the reel gathers in the line inch by inch. Heavens! how heavy he is. We hazard conjectures as to his weight. Perchance 100 pounds. A perch of about 170 had been caught at Butiaba not long before — the record fish for Lake Albert. A 96-pounder had fallen to one of us but a few weeks ago. Was this one any bigger? Time alone would show, but he seemed to weigh a ton. The sun beat down from out a cloudless sky, and the sweat broke out on one, for playing a giant Lates is no joke. Again and again the reel had to spin; again and again the weary winding shortened the line and the life of the big perch at one and the same time. At last, after half an hour's battle, both fisher and fish were spent, dead-beat; but the fight was an unequal one, for the former had allies, the latter none, and so away down in the depths there appeared a huge dim shape which was dragged upwards limp and inert till once more it broke the surface, but this time on its side. A veritable monster, with huge scales, a blubbery toothless mouth gaping wide, and revealing a vast capacious maw, a yellow eye luminous and seemingly void of any pupil, a great humped back and prodigious fins and tail. He was well-nigh as long as the dinghy, and the question was how to get him aboard. The black was ready, and the gaff struck fair and surely into the gleaming mass. Then two white men leant to one side while the oarsman, steadying the victim with the gaff, slashed a holding place with the knife, and then with one heave landed the monster upon the bottom boards. Happily he was past a struggle, for it would have been highly unpleasant to be capsized in a lake swarming with crocodiles and hundreds of yards from any dry land. In due course we weighed him on the scales, which registered 131 lb. His length was five feet five inches, his greatest girth three feet ten inches — a capital catch, but by no means a record. That, I believe, is held by a fish taken in Lake No in the Sudan, which tipped the beam at well over 200 lb.

He was good to eat as well as good to catch, and happily there was plenty of him, for famine was abroad in the land, and the steamer's crew were short of food.

Therefore we all ate him and enjoyed him as we sped down the lake to the merry tune of splashing paddles. Time was no object, and it was agreed that we should run for four hours up the Victoria Nile to see the famous Falls of Murchison, which are less known than they deserve to be. The mouth of the river in the north-eastern corner of the lake is sudded and the channel takes a little finding, but once found there is a good broad

water-way bordered by dense papyrus. We run eastwards and the southern bank looks attractive, for the flats bordering the lake have been left behind and the country is one of open forest. It rises gently from the river in a long slope, broken by hillocks, and fine trees are grouped upon it picturesquely. It is park-like in its way, and the grassy stretches and shady patches are inviting, but we look in vain for habitations. The whole district is taboo, taboo because of the tsetse fly. It is a sleeping-sickness area, and what natives the dread disease has spared have been deported. It is a lonely land so far as man is concerned. But if he is gone, inhabitants of a sort remain, for a small herd of elephants swings into sight, the sun shining on the ivory of the tusker who leads them. With their peculiar rocking gait they plunge through the long grass, vanishing behind clumps of trees, reappearing farther on, their big backs dipping and rising, their trunks swinging from side to side, their fan-like ears flapping like the sails of a ship. Somehow these great quadrupeds remind one of vessels ploughing through a heavy sea—now lost in the trough, anon cresting a swell. Queer beasts, ages old, and always interesting. One is very black, the others grey. If only they stood still they would look like ant-hills, and their own familiar birds would come and settle on them. They vanish, but other game comes into view—the tawny Uganda cob, a very handsome antelope, and herd after herd of shaggy water-buck. Hartebeeste, too—probably Jackson hartebeeste, with smooth hides and ungainly bodies sloping sharply from withers to rump. How their restless tails twitch! and yet they stand agaze devoid of fear. It is a paradise for game now that man is out of the picture. Yet in the blood of some of these fine creatures the wriggling trypanosome, harmless to them, but deadly to their greatest enemy, may be speeding amongst the red blood-cells. This, however, is not a place for such thoughts, for the reaches of the Nile below the Murchison Falls are probably the most pleasing in the whole course of that historic river.

Not the grandest, for the valley below the Ripon Falls is finer; the Fola Rapids, near Nimule, are said to be magnificent; the Shabluka gorge, in the Sudan, has a grim beauty of its own; and the rugged scenery about Shellal and Assuan is, at certain times, impressive in the extreme. No, except at the Falls, the Nile here is not grand, but it is most pleasant to the eye, and full of an abiding interest.

As one progresses, the southern bank takes the form of gravelly hillocks covered with grass and trees, and behind these riverside hummocks the ground rises steeply, but is broken and diversified in rather a singular manner for Nile scenery. Moreover, it is dotted with herds of game, or with solitary buck, and it possesses

a refreshing greenness and considerable variety of foliage. On the sandspits of the foreshore lie huge crocodiles, some olive-dun, some yellowish-green, some almost black in colour, hideous saurians with jaws agape basking in the brilliant sunshine, warming their bellies on the mud. There are many birds, fish and bateleur eagles, storks with long yellow beaks, snowy egrets, the piebald ibis, purple herons, black and white and painted kingfishers, grebes, darters, and a dozen others to whom the Nile means food and home. The nests of weaver-birds deck the bushes ashore. The northern bank is lower and more forest-clad. Against one dense clump of trees, half hidden in the tangled wilderness, we see a big black bull-elephant, a solitary monster apparently half asleep. Soon we notice froth upon the surface, bubbles encased in a brownish spume. The Nile looks like a river in spate: it is drumly and foam-bedecked. We are nearing the great Falls. There is, however, no sign of them. Instead, it would seem as though the river ended—ended right up against a high, wooded, reddish cliff. The crocodiles become more numerous; as in Baker's day, they are to be counted by the score. Fire at them, and it looks almost as if a drove of submarines were being launched. The scene is astonishing even to those used to crocodiles. Hippos thrust their heads out of the river and grunt vigorously, and then away to our right front comes the roar of leaping waters. Drifting spray appears high above the tree-tops, and suddenly we turn almost at right angles to our course. A long gorge lies before us, dark in the rays of the declining sun. The gouts of froth grow larger, and there are more of them; the strength of the current increases. Wooded cliffs rise on either hand to 300 feet or more. At one point, where is an island, they approach each other slightly, and through the gap between them one sees a tumbling mass of water, churned white and breaking incessantly on huge boulders in the river's bed, from which there leaps up almost rhythmically a white mist of spray, rising and falling as though dancing to the music of the Falls. Thus far and no farther said the telegraph wire which runs across the chasm, for, sagging in the centre, it would have caught our mast. Hence overboard went the anchor, and we swung to the chain in mid-stream, a stream dotted by the snouts of saurians, and from which every now and then rose a flesh-coloured hippo's head.

Very soon it was night, but such a night! There was a fine moon, and the vault was clear and full of stars. The cliffs were ebon black, the river vague and mysterious, for a sheeny haze rose from it, and upon this the moon's rays played. All night long the hippos grunted, disturbed by such a strange visitor as the steamer, while now and

then the eerie cry of some night-bird floated on the still air. Up before dawn to witness the sunrise, surely one of the most magnificent a man could see. For a moment all seemed lost in shadow, and then a dull red light filtered into the eastern sky above the Falls, a mere streak at first, but extending rapidly and beginning to glow as though it were the reflection of a fire. Immediately the light clouds assumed a hue of ruddy gilt, and the sky above our heads lightened to a clear pale blue in which one bright star remained like some tinsel trophy at a fair. The day had started, and at once from the forest bluff a flight of kites commenced, the big brown birds launching themselves silently into space and wheeling off to look for breakfast. A hawk shot across the gorge, flying fast as though urged by hunger. The river turned a silver gilt, a marvellous colour, and reflected every golden cloud and all the bushes which flanked it and bent to meet it. The day brightened, the waters took on the hue of a dove's breast, the sun came stealing into sight, swiftly topping the cliffs of the chasm and illuminating the leaping waters. What was only half visible in the evening light was now plain before us. We could see the scar of a landslide; we recognised that the beautiful illustration in Baker's book was either in part imaginary, or that the Falls have altered since his day. One cannot see the whole cascade from the gorge. Only the lower cataract is visible, and even that only in part. Hence it was necessary to get into a whale-boat and row up the river as far as possible—no easy task, for the current is tremendous. Keeping close to the western bank we progress slowly, and turning a prominence observe a horrible looking spot, a reach of mud running inland between high hillocks, a kind of ravine overgrown by unhealthy-looking bush. What really made it horrible, however, was the fact that it was literally packed with crocodiles. At such close quarters—for the nearest was not twenty yards away—this mass of scaly reptiles, of musk-exuding monsters, with their evil heads, huge fangs, rugged backs and serrated tails, was little less than awesome. It was a relief to fire at them and see them galvanised to life and to activity, waddling and slithering waterwards in clumsy haste, plunging into the flood and reappearing as so many little knobs travelling fast across stream amongst the foam and bubbles. We pulled between the island and the shore, but could get no farther, for it was not safe, and the thought of the brutes we had just seen did not encourage us to take any undue risks. Thus we did not enter the basin at the foot of the Falls, and indeed saw little more of them than we had done, save a kind of subsidiary cascade. Still, we were much nearer, and could better appreciate the force and fury of

the waters thundering downwards some 120 feet in all, though undoubtedly divided into an upper and a lower portion, and not one great sweep from top to bottom, as pictured in 'Albert Nyanza.'

Back to the steamer and a last look at the chasm and the gorge. One of us who had been here before recounted how, high on the cliff edge, silhouetted against the sky, he had seen on his last visit a large bull-elephant. As he watched it the pachyderm lifted one hind leg and scratched the other with his foot! One of the charms of this part of Central Africa is that no one can tell what may happen next!

It was easy work running down-stream, and soon we were crossing the mud shallows at the northern end of Lake Albert. Turning to the north we entered the wide Bahr-el-Jebel, the main Nile, and marked away on the right a solitary palm of great height standing sentinel-like upon a ridge. There is still to tell of the voyage to Nimule, which takes about twenty-four hours from the lake. We pass places with historic names, Wadelai and Dufile, recalling memories of Emin Pasha; we go ashore and hunt guinea-fowl in spots where Roosevelt camped not so very long ago. There is famine in the land. The Alur people on the banks have been gathering the fruit of the doleib palm for food. We anchor for the night in what looks like a lake, a huge expansion of the river with a low hill-range to the east, behind which stretches a country still almost unknown. After Dufile comes Ibrahim, a picturesque spot with a bold mountain, and after Ibrahim some fine rocky islands, green as emeralds with vivid creepers and ringed round by papyrus, and after these comes Nimule, the end of the voyage. But there is no getting to Nimule by steamer. The whale-boat has again to be manned, and the black crew labour up the Nyame river between dense belts of reeds. These gave way to banks of a sort, and there at the base of a rocky hill are the few stone and thatch houses, the hut clusters and the two flags which constitute the southern outpost of the Sudan. Not long ago this was also Uganda, but geography has been changing a good deal of late years. So the Union Jack flies here with the new flag of Egypt bearing three silver stars and crescents on a red ground, and we find a solitary Syrian who is doctor and *Mamur* rolled into one, and a very good fellow, anxious to help in every possible way.

Our porters are ready for the hundred-mile tramp to Rejaf—a crowd of lean naked Acholi, who make a wild dash for the baggage, each man striving to get a comfortable load. They are driven off and things eventually are done decently and in order, so that it is a highly respectable caravan which troops out of this death-trap of a place and climbs the rocky slope. The road runs far from the Nile in order

to avoid fly-belts and sleeping sickness districts, and it cannot be said that the itinerary is an interesting one. The natives, Bari for the most part, are degraded-looking and sullen. There is little fine scenery, game is scarce. It is a sad country, scorched by bush-fires, ravaged by disease, haunted by the spectre of famine.

And yet, because the road which runs through it may ere long be a great highway with motors traversing it and carrying heavy bags of coffee, with flying ferries across the rivers which obstruct it, with streams of people coming and going along it, we must say a little about it, though as little as possible. Once having gained the top of the leopard-infested ridge about Nimule, the road, which is suitable for a bicycle, runs for many a mile through stunted forest. Away on the left a long bush-covered mountain-range interposes its bulk between us and the Nile, which beyond it forms the famous Fola Rapids. To the right is a vast stretch of country, here and there kopjes cropping up from the plain, here and there the smoke spirals of native fires wavering upwards against a blue sky. It is very hot, and there is nothing to be seen of wild life save occasional tracks of dik-dik or other of the smaller antelope. It takes three and a half hours to reach the Assua river, a broad stream, half empty, and full of sand-banks. The camp is on the farther side. As we approach the ford, down a long slope, the scene is typically African. Thorny bush everywhere, a circle of grass huts in a clearing, a river dried up in places, wandering to the Nile between low banks set with palms and scrubby bauhinias; an angry sun sinking behind a distant hill-range, and great bats flitting hither and thither in agile zig-zag flight like so many evil spirits. In the rains the Assua must be a formidable obstacle. In the dry season it takes you to the knees in places if you despise the crazy dug-out, through the holes and cracks of which the water gushes. The camp was well enough and moderately clean, but plagued by mosquitoes. It was much too near the river. In all probability representations have caused its removal to a better site. It is worth noting that none of the camps on the Nimule-Rejaf road appear to harbour the dreaded *spirillum* carrier, that loathsome, leathery, eight-legged tick which loves the darkness and the blood of man.

Soon the wood fires blazed, throwing the surroundings into a deeper darkness, the ping of the questing gnat shrilled in the ear, and it was a case of under mosquito-nets with all celerity, if twelve days later on one did not wish to be shaking a thermometer.

From Assua to Aju is two hours, and Aju is a good place for breakfast. From Aju to Itu Gaffari takes one hour and a quarter, and at Itu Gaffari it is well to have lunch. From

Itu Gaffari to Kirippy two hours must be allowed, and there what remains of the day and the whole of the second night can be spent in fair comfort, for Kirippy is a pleasant camp, with good huts and *bandas* and most beautiful shade trees. The country about it is cultivated to some extent, and patches of maize and dura dot the landscape.

Once more on the trail, a two hours' march to Andoga, a place of two huts only, and then on again, a good three hours to Uma, crossing the Uma river on the way, beyond which the road is merely a track winding through an undergrowth reminiscent of a Surrey copse. But no Surrey copse ever grew the rough-barked lulu-trees from which the ripe, yellow, plum-like fruit is falling—a fruit which has a pleasant acidity, and from which quite an agreeable drink can be made. The camp itself lies off the track to the right, and is apt to be missed. There is a good view from it to the north, over miles of low forest, with here and there hills rising from the plain as the back of an elephant rises from the jungle.

It is four hours' tramp from Uma to Musa, much of it through open and cultivated country. Musa camp is on a ridge, and possesses two good trees. To the north the country is wild and broken, but elsewhere there are a few villages, and as a result there is little game. Next morning, two and a half hours' good going brings one to Gadein Morbi, which is on a slope, and overlooks a fine wooded country through which roam herds of hartebeeste. It is still hartebeeste country all the way nearly to Vitia Ledju, which takes three and a half hours to reach, and is a pleasant place, for it is set upon a ridge with a fine rocky ledge near it and forest-clad Gebels hard by. These shelter lots of game, from the rhinoceros to the oribi, but the presence of many natives prevents the animals showing much of themselves. Part of the way to this camp was very cheerful, for there are clear streams in the open, and many doves, and it is good to be out of stunted forest, which is an abomination.

Another four hours through country with a better class of wood and we reach Shoka, crossing *en route* one deep but narrow river. Shoka proved an untidy and uncomfortable camp, and we were glad to be afoot before dawn on the last trek for the Nile and for Rejaf.

These early starts have a fascination of their own, after the inevitable groaning at having to roll out of bed in the darkness and dress by the feeble light of a candle in a shamadan is over. If your *shawish* is any good he has the porters well drilled, and so all goes smoothly, and after a cup of steaming tea and a biscuit you take the road with perchance a crescent moon still in the sky and stars twinkling in company. There is a great silence at this early

hour, and all is dim and mystical. Then certain birds with harsh notes cry out that day is at hand, a faint breeze stirs the branches and lines of sickly light stretch over the hill-tops in the east. Almost imperceptibly the day brightens, and the smell of the night, that curious wild odour, is gone. Then comes a gleam in the sky, and almost at once the sun mounts upwards as though he had stayed too long abed and had to hurry to his work. The moon and the stars vanish, birds call and twitter, an early beetle blunders across the path, a flight of doves swings past seeking water—and another day in Africa, another hot, fierce, fatiguing day, has begun its march from sunrise to sunset.

But it is only some three hours to the Nile, and long ere we reach the river the quaint conical hill of Rejaf has come into sight away beyond the immediate forest slopes. Ere long we break into the open and descend a wide road to a plain, through which the Bahr-el-Jebel, coming from Fort Berkeley and the rapids, courses as a huge deep waterway, making fast to the north, for Gondokoro and Mongalla, and Bor and Kenissa, and those *sudd* regions which must make it think that it has somehow got back to Lake Choga.

The Kit river is almost dry, its bed a broad bed of sand, with water trickling through it, and soon we are pushing over the plain, passing through clumps of dura 10 feet high, and past miserable dwellings smothered in vegetation. On and on at quickened pace, as is always the way when a journey is ending, till at last we reach the landing-place for the ferry, and, amidst a jumble of grass shelters, stand and look across the mighty river from whose source we have come, and which, still tireless and magnificent in its strength, is speeding onwards in a stately fashion to make the Sudan an habitation and to fulfil its destiny in Egypt.

SUBADAR SHER ALI KHAN.

TWENTY years or more ago I was in charge of a big reserve centre situated in a cantonment in the north of India whilst the reservists were up for training. Primarily it was the centre for three Sikh and three Dogra regiments, but, in addition to these, nearly twelve hundred men of other regiments, recruited from districts more or less adjacent to the cantonment, were attached to the centre for administrative and training purposes. These last were chiefly Punjabi Mahomedans, with a large admixture of Euzufzai Pathans. Under the system then in force the training staff for this large body of men had to be found by the regiment stationed at the centre, which at the time happened to be a class regiment of Sikhs; but since, during the previous year's training, there had been a good deal of serious trouble between the Sikh training staff and the Pathan reservists, the G.O.C. had detailed another regiment in the brigade to furnish a party of Pathan N.O.'s and N.C.O.'s, who were attached for duty during the month the reserves were up for training.

In command of the party was an old Euzufzai Pathan —Subadar Sher Ali Khan,—a splendid specimen of the best type of native officer. The old man had put in close on forty years of good work since he had first joined his regiment as a young recruit of between seventeen and eighteen years of age, and had seen active service against almost every tribe on the North-West Frontier of India. Of a Jewish type of face, with a prominent hooked nose, a somewhat scanty beard dyed red, and with piercing slate-blue eyes, in body he was tall and very spare. So spare indeed, he looked little more than skin and bone, but he was incredibly tough and wiry, and could walk all day without turning a hair, whilst on a hillside it took a good man to keep near him. He came of good stock and was a warm man in his own country, more than one village owning his sway.

Thoroughly independent and self-reliant, he was quite willing to take responsibility, as he proved on one occasion when he had a difference of opinion with a young political officer. The Subadar was in command of a small fort at the mouth of a valley which led up into independent tribal country. One day a jirgah, bristling with jezails, pistols, knives, &c., arrived at the fort gate to interview the political officer. Now it was a standing military order on the frontier that, with the exception of the garrison, no man bearing arms was permitted to enter any post, and that all lethal weapons must be deposited with the quarter-

guard, where the owners were at liberty to resume them on departure. In accordance with these orders the sentry on duty at the fort gate stopped the jirgah. They protested, and the political officer (that he was very young and puffed up with a sense of his own importance is the only excuse which can be offered for what occurred), hearing the altercation, sent out to know what was the matter. On hearing that the jirgah had been prevented from entering, he dashed out and ordered the sentry to admit them at once. The sentry quoted his orders, and referred the officer to the Havildar in command of the quarter-guard. He, like a wise man, declined to discuss the matter, and sent for Subadar Sher Ali Khan. The young officer, who had by this time unluckily lost his temper completely, turned on the Subadar and again imperiously ordered the immediate admission of the jirgah. The old man regretted that, as he was responsible for the safety of the fort, he was unable to comply unless the jirgah first deposited their arms in accordance with standing orders,—from which decision nothing would move him. The jirgah was not admitted, and the political officer, boiling with rage, wrote to the commissioner of the district to report the Subadar for disobedience of orders. Sher Ali Khan, however, was no fool,—he also wrote in his version, and reported the case for the information of his commanding officer; the net result being that the young political was sent on special urgent duty to Lahore, and was subsequently transferred to another sphere of usefulness.

One thing the old man had no use for was a horse—at all events for riding purposes,—thoroughly agreeing with David Harum's opinion that, if he had to make his choice between riding and being kicked, he would say, "Kick away; it amounts to about the same thing as far as comfort goes, and it's a dum'd sight safer." It so happened that when his regiment was at Parachinar, in the Kurram valley, some of the officers went out one day to shoot *chikhor*, and the Subadar, who was a bit of a sportsman, wished to accompany them. The valley in which the party proposed to shoot was about five miles away from the frontier post, and one of the officers offered Sher Ali Khan the loan of a pony. The offer was firmly declined, the old man remarking gravely that he had served the Sirkar for over thirty years, and had earned his pension, so he wasn't going to risk the loss of it by getting outside a horse. He tramped out to the valley, and did his full share of walking and scrambling over the rocky hills that *chikhor* love, being most useful in keeping the beaters—mostly wild Pathan villagers—well in hand, and came back in the evening as fresh as paint, though most of the rest of the party had had quite enough.

He certainly had his some-

what unruly command of Pathans in wonderful order, though his methods would perhaps be considered drastic in the present day. Only on one occasion did I go near his company, which was at the time broken up into squads for preliminary drills, and I saw enough to convince me that only two courses were open to me—viz., putting him under arrest, or complete non-interference. As I stood there talking to the old man on some point of drill, he saw that one of the men was paying no attention to his instructor. He rushed up to him, and, after pouring forth a flood of what I took to be abuse (for I knew no Pushtu), seized the man by the nose and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat. A little while later something else went wrong, and, springing on the man who was at fault, he gave him a box on the ear which would have pretty well knocked him down had not an equally severe cuff on the other side of the head put him straight again. The remainder of the men were struggling hard to keep serious faces, for apparently the old gentleman had, in addition to a heavy hand, a pretty wit, and not even the victims resented his summary discipline, though, had I laid a finger on any one of them, I might likely have got a knife or a bayonet into me. After the above incidents, I thought it best to find occupation at other parts of the parade-ground. Whatever may have been one's opinion of his methods, they had the great merit of success, for in about a week his company were drilling with a smartness and precision they had been strangers to since the days when, in the first squad of recruits, they had received their final polish from the Adjutant before being passed into the ranks. At the same time, in spite of their success, I do not recommend his methods for imitation, but merely chronicle them as one of the old gentleman's little peculiarities.

If, however, his ways on parade were summary, his discipline in the lines was no less drastic. Always before orderly-room he used to hold a small Durbar of his own, and inquire into any little peccadilloes which had been committed by his men. He would hear everything that was to be said on either side, and if he did not consider the case a serious one, would deal with it himself, as often as not slipping off his shoe and beating the culprit across the mouth or over the head with it. If he thought the case was a serious one he would reserve it for the C.O., and nothing annoyed him more than the man's being let off, or receiving a light award. One day he brought three or four men before me in this manner, to the best of my recollection for some not very serious acts of insubordination. Now there was always a difficulty at that time in dealing with reservists, for, as the men were up for so short a period, one was loth to put them in cells because of the loss of time, whilst long periods of confinement to the

lines seemed a scarcely suitable punishment, more especially towards the end of the training, as a man would be going back to his home before his punishment was completed. On this particular occasion, there being barely ten days of the training left to run, I gave the men the rough edge of my tongue for five minutes or so, and, after warning them if they were brought up again I would try them by summary court-martial, let them go. Sher Ali Khan remained behind, when every one else had departed, and then, with the utmost respect, proceeded to tell me off, explaining to me that, no doubt, I was accustomed to dealing with Sikhs, but that the Pathan required sterner discipline. He then gave me to understand, still in the most respectful way, that when he brought any one before me, it was because the man deserved punishment, and that he was quite capable of dealing with minor or trivial offences himself. The whole thing was done very firmly, but at the same time so respectfully and politely that it was quite impossible to resent the old man's remarks, though he made me feel rather as if I were a schoolboy prefect again, and being reproved by my house-master for some want of tact or error of judgment.

I was quite sorry to say good-bye to the old man at the end of the training, and the more so as his regiment was shortly afterwards moved to another station, so that I never came across him again. I heard, however, that he took his well-earned pension a year or two later, and hope sincerely he may still be in enjoyment of it. A better native officer I have never had under my command.

E. F. K.

AN ARMED MINORITY.

BRITISH statesmen always talk of the people of Ireland as if their psychology were the same as their own.

The difference in mentality and temperament has never been really understood by many of those who venture to take on themselves the burden of legislation for the future.

The word freedom is always on the Irish tongue. It may be safely said that no white race had ever less idea of what freedom means than the ordinary Irish.

Freedom elsewhere means liberty to go your own way, to conduct your own affairs as you desire, in so far as your doing so will not conflict with the general weal. Freedom in Ireland means liberty to trample on your neighbour's rights and privileges.

A man who attempts to use his property as he pleases, and not as directed by the ruling local camarilla, must be compelled to conform. If he will not give up his lands when ordered to do so, his cattle will be driven again and again, and his family so terrorised that at last he will be obliged to surrender.

These methods were employed while there was a pretence of law and order; at present, when the executive and the police can hardly do more than protect their own lives, the will of the local authority is enforced by open murder.

An example has recently occurred of the Irish idea of the liberty of the Press.

In a deliberately planned attempt to murder the Viceroy, one of the attacking party was shot by the escort. The popular organ of the Republican party described this man as "the would-be assassin." A few nights after the office of this newspaper, situate in the heart of the capital, was taken possession of by an armed band. Damage was then done to the machinery to the extent of between twenty and thirty thousand pounds. A writing was handed to the Editor pointing out to him the error of which he had been guilty, and in respect of which retribution had been exacted.

All Irishmen, both those of the North and those of the South, are believed, not without good reason, to possess physical courage in a high degree. During the late war, when deeds of heroism were done perhaps surpassing anything recorded, the very highest standard was sometimes reached, notably in the advance of the Ulster Division at Thiepval on 1st July 1916. The Southern Irish Regiments on several occasions showed themselves by no means inferior.

But there is a difference.

The Southern Irish, except the gentry and more educated classes, are deplorably destitute of moral courage. Why this is so we need not stop to inquire, but that it is so is a demonstrated fact. A man who has won the Victoria Cross trembles at the whisper of a boycott, and grovels before those whom he hates and despises. People who have seen their own relations murdered in their presence often refuse to give evidence, and will actually try to win the favours of those they know to be guilty of the crime. In Ulster moral courage is more abundant, and one could no more imagine a boycott put into operation there than in Scotland or England. Mainly in consequence of this failing in the rest of Ireland we behold the extraordinary spectacle of an armed minority coercing the majority by terror.

This may be disputed by those who point out the results of the contested elections.

There has been, no doubt, remarkable abstention, but the vast majority of the votes recorded were in favour of the party of violence. When a man approaches the ballot-box, it is said, surely he is free from the control of the local clique. Is he? Most certainly not. He believes that the secret society has some means of discovering how he has voted, and he will vote not as he wishes, but to please the formidable ruling power. Moreover, in the excitement of an election he is easily led to believe that in voting for the violent party he is voting against England, the chief and permanent object of his hatred.

One occasionally hears it proposed that the decent orderly folk in the Southern and Western counties should organise themselves and form Vigilance Committees for the protection of their houses and families. These efforts would require qualities they have not got and never will acquire. A dozen young adventurers can keep a whole countryside in abject terror.

The chief object of the prevailing cult is to hold the South and West in continual unrest and panic.

Where there is any symptom of a relapse into peace and order, directions are given from headquarters for raids on private houses and concentrated attacks by large and specially armed bodies on police barracks. The intellectual Republicans sit at ease in Dublin, and supply stimulating literature and funds in abundance.

To expect the quiet folk to organise themselves for protection is very much like expecting a rabbit-warren to organise itself against stoats and weasels.

The only protection in rural districts is the indomitable Royal Irish Constabulary assisted by the military.

The numbers of the force are wholly insufficient for the present crisis. The Constabulary complement was 15,000

men in times less dangerous —now it does not exceed 10,000 men.

The Police are obliged to concentrate for self-protection in the larger barracks, and the ordinary barracks are being abandoned. This has a most depressing effect on the people. They feel like the peaceful provincials when they saw the legions of Honorius in retreat before the advance of the barbarians.

It is shocking to contemplate the criminal folly of those who cry, "Take away the Army and all will be well." If the Army were withdrawn the thin dark line of the Constabulary would be immediately broken and submerged. The Dublin Metropolitan Police, an equally valiant force, are confronted in the capital by a partly armed and disciplined body of ten times their number, and without military aid they would be powerless even to protect themselves.

What, then, is to be done? Is this to go on for ever?

Well — there is a Home Rule Bill. It has passed its second reading with an enormous majority, and appears certain to become law. It is received with sullen acquiescence on the part of Ulster. It is received by the extreme Nationalists with yells of derision as an insult to the nation. It is the result of long and anxious thought, and is drafted with a precision and skill unprecedented in the case of Irish Bills. It is moulded on the only possible lines. The British and American world have decided that an experiment must be made. What is called self-determination is to be applied to Ireland, and six counties in Ulster are to enjoy self-determination of their own.

There is machinery provided for an ultimate union, if the two Parliaments in the dim future so determine.

Unless Ulster is to be coerced, which is out of the question, no other Bill in its main features is possible.

There is every reason for believing that the "Ulster Parliament" will be a brilliant success.

In Sir Edward Carson she has a leader whose instinct in the most difficult and dangerous times has never gone wrong. No doubt in the perilous crisis of 1913 he decided on a desperate course of action — armed resistance to the authority of Parliament. It must not be forgotten that in the opinion of many great lawyers the Government, in conspiring to destroy the House of Lords, one of the estates of the realm, was guilty of "treason" in point of law—it was therefore lawful to resist a measure that was made operative by treason. In the case of the ordinary Ulster man these constitutional and legal considerations had little weight.

The situation presented itself to his mind in this way.

"We are deserted by the British democracy."

"Our lives and our liberties

are complimented away to those who work for the destruction of the Empire and the expulsion of the loyal people from Ireland. There is only one thing to be done, and that is, to die in our boots, resisting to the last."

The Great War came, and they assert that in its course their attitude was fully justified. The rebel party treacherously struck at England when she was fighting for her life against Germany in 1916, while Ulster with desperate valour fought for the Empire from the beginning to the end.

They were not unmindful of these from Southern and Western Ireland who fought by their side for the liberty of the world,—the glorious rivalry of Messines will not lightly be forgotten,—they indeed played a noble part—all the more noble because they were likely to suffer for it on their return to the country they had helped to preserve.

Most men would agree that the Ulster leader is preeminently the one intrepid statesman of our time, but everybody does not know that he is one of the most tolerant of men, and absolutely free from any taint of religious and racial bigotry. He is a man who entered on public life with a profound distrust of politics, and has been driven into the hated arena only by the force of circumstances. The minority in Ulster, notwithstanding the cries of ecclesiastical alarmists, have no real fear of injustice or oppression. The example of the Ulster Parliament may have an influence on the Southern Parliament beyond expectation. One thing only is wanting—a great leader. If Southern Ireland could produce another Carson, with the same courage and liberality, the problem of centuries would be within sight of solution. Is there any hope of his coming? None for the present. The dread pestilence must proceed some way further on its course before his coming would be effectual.

Moreover, it is difficult to conceive how in the near future he could secure a hearing at all, if he did not begin (*more Hibernico*) by perverting all the facts in his country's history, and by misrepresenting all that the Imperial Parliament has done for Ireland in recent years.

The policy of organised murder now holds the field. It no longer needs to assume any disguises; it does not trouble to cover up its tracks; it speaks in broad daylight in the public streets, in the public conveyances. The mind of the people is benumbed; it has almost ceased to be shocked. The great Church that was once all-powerful looks on stricken with a kind of paralysis.

There is no powerful united movement such as it put forward when conscription threatened. Its efforts are half-hearted, feeble, and sporadic. The ecclesiastical thun-

ders that were so destructive to the secret societies in the Fenian days are never heard now. Notwithstanding all that was going on in Belgium it never denounced pro-Germanism. Some bishops and most of the younger clergy openly favour the Republican movement. But the older and wiser clergy are well aware that they are threatened by a portent more terrible than Cromwellian methods or penal laws. The coming of James Connolly was an event of momentous importance in modern Ireland. Gifted with a mind of great power, he had imbibed from his youth the doctrines of Marxian Socialism in their most extreme form. He was trained in the very same school as Lenin. His unhappy experiences in England and Scotland filled his heart with bitterness and hatred. His writings and speeches are not marked by the mendacity as to facts which usually characterises the propaganda of the popular party in Ireland; but they are remarkable for persistent perversity of reasoning, and exploded economic fallacies run through them all. He had no respect whatever for the historic objects of Irish veneration; he scorned Sarsfield, Grattan, Flood, O'Connell, and Butt; he pulled down the political saints from their niches and smashed their aureoles — he had no patience with the mere rhetoricians. His great aim was to unite the rebel Irish element and the Socialistic labour organisations. This was no light task. There were many Republican idealists who had no sympathy with plots for the destruction of civilised society, and yet he had a strange compelling power, by which he almost succeeded in brigading together these discordant elements immediately before the Easter rebellion. Although his doctrine was nothing short of extreme Bolshevism, he had not divested himself of religious belief at the time of his death. But whatever his own personal views may have been, the machine he constructed will turn out a product that may undermine the great fabric of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

This would not be an unmixed evil in the eyes of some, who look on the power of the priests as the cause of all Ireland's misfortunes. They know that the systematic inculcation of hatred to England has an evil effect on the country. They cannot understand the conduct of many of the clergy in dealing lightly with crimes that will lower the moral tone of the country for generations.

They read with amazement the somewhat mild denunciation of murder in the pastorals, accompanied by comments on woman's dress, and ending in fierce denunciation of military rule.

Some of the clergy seem to endorse the oft-repeated falsehood that the coercive measures are the real cause of crime. The very contrary is demonstrable. Under the Birrell

régime everything in the nature of coercion was swept away. Deadly weapons were allowed into the country without restraint; the Detective Department was weakened and almost disarmed; the Secret Service Fund was practically abolished; armed men were allowed to drill, and actually to rehearse attacks on the seat of Government; during and at the time of the rebellion unarmed policemen were cruelly murdered in the public streets. Coercive measures were only adopted as necessity required, and so far have failed to keep up with the advance of barbarous crime. But when all is said, no wise man can contemplate without dismay the authority of the Catholic Church falling into decrepitude and contempt. Many of the clergy fearlessly denounce crime; all of them inculcate Christian doctrines.

It was noteworthy that a constable who was recently mortally wounded by a treacherous shot in the back, when returning from Mass, prayed to the end for the forgiveness of his murderers. A faith that produces an example of this kind is not to be disparaged, even if the conduct of its ministers is disappointing, and in some respects deplorable. If the restraints imposed by the Church become weak and obsolete, nothing remains for Ireland but red revolution and anarchy. Underlying the many good and attractive qualities in Irish nature, there is a strain of latent ferocity that, if unbridled, might soon make the name of Ireland a horror in the mouth of civilised mankind.

Every effective influence for good must be encouraged and developed so far as possible. But the damage is not to be ignored. Nothing is so contagious as the leprosy of Bolshevism. Men wondered when they beheld the great German High Seas Fleet on its way to a disgraceful surrender. This was not brought about by any want of courage on the part of the men, or by any failure on the part of the Government to maintain it with material and supplies.

We now know that the beaten Russian, working in conjunction with the Socialistic defeatists, managed to inject the Teutonic victor with the loathsome malady from which he suffers himself. To Germany it was the end of all things: the end of her pride and the extinction of all hope of recovery in the near future. The older clergy are well aware that the unclean thing exists among the people, and that there are some among them who are secretly trying to foster its growth.

Meanwhile the so-called war goes on, and it is hard to see how it can be checked while the people are held down by terror. But the end is coming, and with certainty. The destiny of all murderous secret societies is self-destruction: they begin to murder one another.

Things will sometimes go wrong, suspicions will manifest themselves, the suspected man will be done away with for the sake of the general safety.

Those who are so lost to all sense of right as to murder innocent people are prepared on the slightest suspicion to murder a comrade. The doom of such societies in Sicily, in France, in America, or elsewhere has always been the same. So will it be in Ireland. Many of those who started the mad rebellion of 1916 were wild idealists. They hoped to create a new heaven and a new earth; they now see that they have created a new hell in a country that for the time being has become a lake of cruelty and demoralisation. It is impossible to think that this state of things can go on much longer. There is already a passionate desire for peace, a disgust at the continual shedding of blood, and a longing to see the end of the tyranny that can effect nothing but the permanent dishonour and degradation of an ancient race.

ARCTURUS.

SUNDAY IN EXILE.

I LOOK from an upper window of my house over the valley. Below me lie ordered terraces. Dark-green plantations of coffee and orchards of "kath" break the monotony of the ripening barley. Thick hedges of cactus show where narrow lanes wind in and out among the cultivation. Away to the left runs the highroad, with its constant stream of white-clad passers-by, its convoys of coffee-laden donkeys, and now and again a string of slow-moving supercilious camels. In the centre of the picture lies the city, tightly packed within its russet walls. Three of its gates are visible from my window, each teeming with life as the water-carriers come and go, or a chief with his retinue passes. Here and there a modern white building stands out with startling prominence, and a totally fictitious appearance of size lent to it by its pigmy neighbours. Splashes of colour are given by the huge flag which flaps lazily above the Italian Consulate, and the Abyssinian tricolor dominating the town from the roof of the Palace. For it is at an Abyssinian landscape that I am looking, and the day is Sunday, when we fly our flags to the glory of God and the magnification of our respective governments.

People at home have vague impressions of what Abyssinia is like, and certainly Harar with its valley, which lies spread before me, is unlike anything they imagine. Indeed, it is not really Abyssinia at all, but an ancient Arab city now ruled by the Abyssinians. Domesticity is the keynote of the landscape—a landscape which would rejoice the heart of the advocate of "three acres and a cow." The day is glorious, so I take my stick and, faithful to home traditions, sally forth for my Sunday afternoon's walk. Just beyond my garden wall runs a stream. As it passes my gate it is an insignificant trickle down a gutter by the roadside. Fifty yards lower it has played a surprising trick in carving out for itself a deep cleft in the middle of the road. This sudden antic has been too much for some poor donkey, whose half-picked bones lie at the bottom, while the stream, as it drops over the edge, chuckles maliciously at the success of its practical joke.

Leaving the stream on my left, I enter a narrow lane hedged by tall Euphorbia cactus and flowering briers. Luckily I know my way, for every few yards is a turning leading to a cul-de-sac in the front yard of a native house. From these come shrill sounds of domestic argument or the indolent thrumming of a one-stringed lute, where a contented Abyssinian, mellowed by his Sabbath flagon of Tej, suns himself in his porch. To

my left, beyond the stream, rises the nasal caterwauling of the neophytes who inhabit the graveyard of Saint Mikail's Church. The old church is a simple building of the common octagonal form, and faced with blue plaster. Being low and unassuming, its roof of corrugated iron does not look out of place; and its old-fashioned eight-pointed cross, each point crowned with an ostrich's egg, gives it a distinctive character. Not far above it stands the new church, a far more pretentious structure in grey stone, now being raised by the Prince Regent to the memory of his father. It once promised to be an ornament to the landscape, standing out finely on a little bluff looking over the valley; but, alas! it seems that money won't run to a dome, so, as usual in Abyssinia, it will be a case of *finis deformat opus*, and a tin roof and dummy clock, whose painted hands will register perpetual noon, will crown an otherwise imposing edifice—not an inappropriate monument to a strong ruler whose premature death left his life's work in the hands of a weakling son. Round the church are grouped small square huts of mud or stone. These are built over the graves of departed notables, and in them live the students whose chants now destroy the peace of the Sunday afternoon.

A few more twists in my little lane and I come to an archway in the hedge, framed in convolvulus and wild-rose. Twenty yards or so through this archway, flanked by a garden of flaming chillies, brings me to the house of my friend, the Alaqa Desta. The house is roughly oval in plan, of wattle and daub, with a steep thatched roof. Two big posts support the ridge pole. The walls are double, the inner having gaps in it which give entrance to the space between it and the outer one. This space, about four feet wide, is divided into compartments for various purposes.

The outer wall stops short six feet on either side of the door. The sheltered space thus left, under the overhanging eaves to right and left of the entrance, has been built up with solid earth to the height of a couple of feet or so, and provides a kind of "stoep." On one side of this stoep are some gorgeous scarlet chillies, drying, while on the other a couple of small slaves are enjoying the afternoon sun, and awaiting the pleasure of their master. On the far side of the hut sits the Alaqa Desta, on a slightly raised part of the floor, reading the Psalms of David to himself in a whispered monotone.

The Alaqa is a dignitary of the Church. He is not an ordained priest or monk, but controls the finances of one of the local churches. He is, for an Abyssinian, a well-read man, and is at present engaged in writing a History of the World. He can talk quite glibly about sectarian differences in the European Churches,

and makes occasional mention of Plato. I doubt if he knows much of Plato beyond his name, but no more do I, so I am not in a position to throw stones at the Alaqa on this point. He talks very interestingly on a good many subjects, especially on Abyssinian history of the last century, so we often visit each other. I also happen to own a book in the Geez language, entitled 'The Contendings of the Apostles,' which the Alaqa hopes to acquire by fair means or foul before I leave Harar, and this fact cements our friendship. He comes to the door to greet me, leads me to a low, round, wooden stool, and orders the inevitable coffee.

I learn that since our last meeting his wife has presented him with a son, who is brought, naked and wriggling, by a slave woman for my inspection. The lady is in bed in one of the recesses in the wall, behind a curtain. While I am drinking my coffee, her father confessor enters. He is a tall black-bearded priest, in exceedingly dirty clothes, with the usual priestly beef-steak pudding-napkin round his head. After salutations, he passes behind the curtain, and a monotonous singsong begins, which sounds like the Psalms being read. The Alaqa, I am afraid, looks rather bored by the father confessor, and pays him no attention.

As I am out for exercise, I do not stay here long, but once more follow the windings of my little lane. A turning brings me on to an open terrace, and a closer view of the city and its approaches greets me.

One of the peculiar features of the town is the false impression of size and distance which it gives. Everything in it is really on a miniature scale. The small houses are so very small that the bigger ones look quite big, and the eye of an observer standing six hundred yards from its walls refuses credence to its dwarfishness, and accepts the impression of a full-sized city at four times its true distance. Thus the mean little Palace with its crenelated towers poses successfully as a full-grown mediæval castle, and the stunted minarets of the mosque lose their stuntedness in the general illusion.

Below the point where I stand, the streamlet of my garden gate runs through a new imposing gorge between me and the walls of the town, while one of the main approaches to the gates lies at my feet. This road has been worn deeper and deeper by the passage of generations of wayfarers and pack-animals, till it resembles a wide communication trench, only coming to the surface where a belt of harder rock is crossed.

Away beyond the road the country descends in a series of undulations to the river Errer, and on the far side rise the mountain masses which separate the Harar Valley from Somaliland. The stark outlines of these ranges, thrown into relief by the afternoon sun, form a wonderful back-

ground to the peaceful beauty of the fertile valley.

Scorning the road, I plunge steeply down one side of the ravine and up the other, to the walls of the town. A path runs round the walls, and this under a European régime would make an ideal Sunday promenade for the local Edwin and Angelina with their olive-branches. Unfortunately it now passes over the garbage flung from the walls by generations of Hararis. Dogs, carrion-birds, and the purifying heat of the sun have done their best to mitigate the offensiveness of the latest additions of filth, but in spite of their efforts there is no need for the warning, so familiar at French cross-roads, "Do not loiter here." So I hurry on my way to my next objective, the Leper Asylum.

As I go, I pass strings of women, filing down to the stream, with their water-pots on their heads, or caught up in a shawl on their backs: Negroid-looking slave girls, owned by Abyssinians, and wearing the usual filthy white gown held by a cord round the waist, or Hararis of a rather gipsy type, their characteristic black-and-red robe falling like an exaggeratedly floppy blouse outside the wide sash which catches up the skirt high enough to show their gaudily-striped trousers. Most of these ladies are cackling away merrily to each other: some are attractive enough as to face and figure. All are profoundly dirty.

Next, I come to the gate-way, with its lounging Abyssinian guard. There is nothing in the low flat archway to call for comment. The cultivation, which elsewhere comes almost up to the walls, here recedes and leaves an open space devoted to many unsavoury purposes — among others, to the slaughter of cattle, whose inedible portions strew the ground and poison the air. Here also is a Moslem burial-ground. Tradition has it that in time past the Hararis were so hard pressed by the surrounding hostile tribes that they were forced to bury their dead immediately outside their gates. This reason no longer holds good, but force of habit perpetuates the custom.

A little farther on, a few hundred yards from the walls, lies the Leper Asylum, its chapel and native huts neatly arranged, and planted with eucalyptus and pepper trees. This asylum is run by the French missionaries, and is under the charge of my friend Père Charles, who is helped by three or four devoted sisters.

Père Charles is a truly jovial monk. He is a living testimony to the truth that "a contented mind is a purse well lined," though not many a "capon fine" comes his way. He is of middle height and pleasing rotundity, and his rubicund face and understanding eyes diffuse an atmosphere of energetic kindness from above his venerable beard.

In addition to his labours of mercy, Père Charles spends his spare time in farming. At one

end of a long shed is stacked his season's hay crop, while at the other are the inevitable chillies drying. Chillies are the most profitable of the easily-grown crops, and Père Charles adds considerably to the revenues of his asylum by his energies.

As is usually the case, he has been taking violent exercise, and is in a *transpiration*. The sun is getting low, and the air is fresh, so we pace rapidly up and down his verandah to avoid a chill.

Père Charles is no politician, but he follows current events closely by means of the Havas wires and month-old newspapers. His comments on happenings at home are remarkably broad-minded yet vigorous, as becomes one who, though no longer of the world, is yet very much in the world. He holds forth this afternoon on the Sabbath-keeping habits of the British, as exemplified by my being on foot and not on horseback, and to this habit he attributes Britain's greatness.

When the *transpiration* has abated, we pass through a little dividing-gate to pay our respects to the Mother Superior and the Sisters. If saints to-day walk the earth, these women are such. Their waking hours are passed in a world of horrors. They have none of the appliances and elaborate arrangements which mitigate the repulsiveness of big modern leper asylums. Their only medicine is corrosive sublimate, and when a finger or a toe is ready to fall, the deed is done with an ordinary pair of scissors. Though the Sisters have a house apart, almost all their time is spent teaching or working with their patients. Even the Mother Superior quite simply admits that their work demands *un dévouement spécial*. But there is a look of wonderful serenity on their pale tired faces, such a serenity as can only be found by the exchange of all that the ordinary person holds as worth having, not for the unprofitable peace of a cell, but for a laborious existence devoted to suffering humanity.

Evening is closing in, and it is time I turned homeward. This time my way lies through the town, and I join the stream of water-carriers and firewood-laden donkeys which pours through the gate. From each donkey-load the Abyssinian guard snatches three or four pieces of wood as an arbitrary customs duty. Just inside the gate is a small market where the wood and grass is being disposed of with a great deal of noisy haggling. Should the purchaser be an Abyssinian, the bargain is usually closed by his snatching three or four sticks from another bundle and unceremoniously making off with his augmented purchase, leaving the poor old Galla vendor clucking with rage like a hen robbed of her chicks, and with about as much chance of redress.

Very different are the manners when Greek meets Greek. A bearded Abyssinian

squireen is riding his mule up the street in front of me, a small half-naked slave-boy trotting behind him with his rifle. Towards him comes a friend, similarly mounted and attended. In a moment both are off their mules, bowing low to each other with drawn-back foot. As they go through their ritual of courtesy, black felt-hat clasped to the waist, and long burnous rakishly cocked up behind by the curved sabre which keeps time to their bows like a pheasant's tail, they strongly recall pictures of the old English Cavaliers. The greeting, culminating in a kiss on both cheeks, is followed by an equally courteous farewell, and both leap on to their mules and ride on their respective ways.

The street I follow is narrow and rocky. It climbs steeply between the tiny flat-topped shops of the Arab traders, with a fair sprinkling of coffee-shops. Many of the occupants are British subjects, and are parties in some interminable lawsuit, in which both sides are invariably lying. I therefore get a good number of salaams from gentlemen who hope that politeness will patch over the weaker parts of their cases.

At the top of the hill, the street opens into the Feress Magalla, or main square of the town. At the entrance to the square sit the hordes of professional beggars. Most of them are afflicted with disgusting sores or deformities, or are in the state of genial idiocy produced by the undue consumption of the leaves of the "kath" plant, without which the local Galla seems unable to exist. On the opposite side of the square stands the "Café de l'Europe," a single-storied building combining the functions of liquor-shop and general store. On a railed-off part of the verandah sit the élite of Harar's white population, sipping Pernot. There is the French postmaster, an employé of the Italian Consulate, the Greek bank manager, and one or two Greek or Levantine merchants. Thus does the Continental café habit rise superior to the most discouraging circumstances.

On another side of the square stands the main church of the town, and one or two dirty and brutalised-looking priests loll by its gateway, marked contrasts to the robust energy of Père Charles or the seemingly ascetic dignity of the Alaqa.

Facing the church is the entrance to the courtyard where Abyssinian justice is dispensed on week-days. The archway of this courtyard is adorned by two dilapidated plaster lions. They would be more imposing if time and weather had not removed the front half of one of them, leaving only his hind-quarters and tail to face his more complete brother across the way. From the medley of buildings which flank the yard come the roars of real live lions, four of which help to maintain the state of the Dedjazmatch, or local governor. They live in tiny cages where there is hardly room for them to turn

round; one is paralysed, and all are in wretched condition, and probably envy their frontless counterpart on the gateway. He at least gets plenty of fresh air.

The royal emblem of Ethiopia is the Lion of Juda. One cannot help feeling that the same qualities which have caused the Abyssinians to keep these poor brutes to rot in their cages, and which leave them content with half a lion on their Palace gate, must ere long reduce the proud beast which struts upon their royal seal to like degradation.

The evening fires are lit, and the smell of wood-smoke rises to meet me as I leave the plateau of the market square, and dive down another precipitous alley through lines of wattle-and-daub huts, which in this quarter of the town replace the flat-topped stone houses of Arab construction. This time the sentries at the gate salute me politely, for this being one of the gates I use daily, the guard receive a periodical bakasheesh. The day of presentation is at hand, so they are on their best behaviour.

Once more I pick my way in the gathering dusk across the abomination of desolation beyond the gates, and scrambling across a little stream which runs below the walls, I begin the steep climb towards my house.

The velvety Eastern darkness falls like a cloak. Ghoulish shapes of overfed pariahs slink past me along the hedges. As I reach the level of Saint Mikail's Church, I pause and look back towards the town. It lies below me, a dark mass, picked out with twinkling fairy lights, and all its meanness veiled by the gentle night. The hum of many voices rises to my ears with a curious sense of human friendliness.

Then, as I bend my steps slowly towards my house through the solitude of the coffee gardens, Harar with all its alien charm slips from me in the darkness. Thoughts of far-off Sundays crowd upon me: the keen air of Norfolk blows in my nostrils; a little white form, with ever-faithful eyes, pads softly at my heels on phantom feet, and Memory takes me by the hand and leads me Home.

L. A.

THE HEEL OF ACHILLES.

BY J. A. STRAHAN.

"On what do the destinies of empires hang! If, instead of the expedition to Egypt, I had made that of Ireland, . . . what would England have been to-day? and the Continent? and the political world?"[1] So Napoleon is reported to have said at St Helena. Vision, it must be admitted, came to him somewhat late. When it would have served his own ambition and the French lust for dominion, he was blinded by the glamour of the East. The sunshine of the Orient dazzled him into dreaming of a new Empire of the East. Through Syria, he declared, he would turn the flank of the armies of Europe. If he had been half as great a sailor as he was a soldier he would have seen then, and not only after all his projects had ended in utter ruin, that it was for his own and France's fortunes ten times better to turn through Ireland the flank of the fleets of England.

The more one reads of modern history, the more one is inclined to think that after all there is something in Oliver Cromwell's belief in "God's Englishman," not perhaps altogether in Oliver's sense, but in the sense that the Englishman seems to be, or at any rate to have been in the past, specially favoured by Providence. Living on an island, no nation can do him mortal injury so long as he is master of the seas. In maintaining that mastery again and again the winds have been his allies and never his enemies. And he has been even more helped by the want of sea-sense among the nations nearest him who wished to do him mortal injury. Till the late war these nations have mostly been the Spaniards or the French. Neither of these had sufficient seamanship to bring disaster in battle to his power on the seas; but what is more, neither of them was able to perceive how disaster to it might otherwise be brought.

Ireland is the Achilles' heel of English sea-power. She lies between Great Britain and everywhere. Not a soldier can be sent out to any colony or dependency of the Empire, not a bale of cotton or wool or a ton of wheat or frozen meat can be brought in from the United States, or Australia, or South America save in ships which have to pass her northern or her southern coasts. An energetic enemy possessed of these coasts and their innumerable harbours might strangle England as surely as in the late war England strangled Germany. Yet never, save on

[1] Las Cases, vol. ii. p. 335.

one occasion, has an enemy of England's made any serious attempt to obtain possession of those coasts and harbours.

That was not for want of invitations to do so: with a single exception, all England's enemies were, as Mr de Valera recently told an American audience, regarded by Irish patriots as Ireland's friends. The Americans were the one exception to which Mr de Valera thought proper not to refer. During the War of Independence the Irish patriots took violently the side of England, and on the motion of their leader, Henry Flood, raised an army of twenty thousand men, whom Flood called "armed negotiators," to help to crush the rebels—the first time, I think, since the Revolution of 1688 that Irish Roman Catholics were armed to fight England's enemies. One can hardly blame the "President of the Irish Republic" for failing to dwell upon this point in addressing an American audience, any more than on the fact that it was the relatives of the loyal Protestants of the North who helped to win America her victory.

The Dutch, the Russians, and the Germans were precluded by their position from accepting these invitations to Ireland's shores. But no such difficulties lay in the way of accepting them so far as Spain and France were concerned. And both of them did accept them more than once, but never, save on one occasion, in any other way than that which must bring disaster on those who invited them. Both of them seemed to regard Ireland as merely a sore on the body politic of England, by irritating which they might cause her discomfort, never as a joint in her armour through which a well-directed blow might end her life.

The first English invasion of Ireland took place under the sanction of the Pope, and the first Continental intervention against the English in Ireland was initiated under the same auspices: it is hard to say which was more disastrous to the Irish race. It was Sir James Fitzmaurice, a former and most capable rebel, who had been previously but perhaps not very prudently pardoned, that sought his Holiness's aid, and the aid secured took the form of a papal legate, a blessed banner, and a few sets of arms. Later, Philip II. of Spain was induced to send some eight hundred soldiers. This intervention ended in the massacre of Philip's soldiers, the destruction of the great house of Desmond, and the devastation of the province of Munster. It is interesting to remember that both Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh served throughout these proceedings in the English army, and that the latter superintended the slaughter of the Spaniards.

Later, Philip intervened again. This time it was during the rebellion in Ulster. Never had a man a better chance of striking his enemy a deadly blow, and never did a man deal

such a paltry stroke. The great Earl of Tyrone had contrived to form a national alliance against the English. Again and again he had defeated them on the field. Army after army had been poured into Ireland, and it was only when he was yielding to superior numbers that Philip sent him help. Fifty ships brought three thousand soldiers to Kinsale Bay; they landed and fortified themselves, and called on Tyrone to join them. Tyrone marched from the North; but when he reached Kinsale the English army was there before him, the Spanish ships had sailed away, and the Spaniards were besieged by sea and land. They called on Tyrone to relieve them. Against his better judgment (for he wished to await the Spanish fleet's return), Tyrone tried to do so and was defeated. Then the Spaniards surrendered, on condition that they were allowed to sail back to Spain.

These were the efforts to free Ireland made by the king who sent the Invincible Armada to conquer England. If he had sent the Armada to Ireland the history of the world might have been changed as completely as Napoleon guessed it would have been had he taken his army to Ireland instead of to Egypt.

When Philip sent his last expedition, Ireland was united as it never was before and has only once been since in her whole history. When Louis XIV. sent his help she was doubly divided. In 1689 the colonists of the North were in arms to maintain the Protestant religion and the English connection. The people of the South were all in arms to maintain the Catholic religion; but some of them were in arms also to maintain the English connection, while the rest were in arms to break it. King James, who wished to be restored to the throne of Great Britain, naturally sided with the first party, and King Louis, who wished to see Great Britain's power broken, sided with the other party. With such a division in their objects it is not strange that the Southerners failed before the Ulster colonists at Derry and Enniskillen, and fled before William's army at the Boyne. It was only when James and his friends had abandoned them that they put up a desperate and nearly successful fight for what has always been the real object of Irish Nationalists since there were Irish Nationalists—the independence of Ireland.

King Louis's intervention was on much the same lines as King Philip's, only more so. He sent an army to watch his own interests more than Ireland's: a hundred officers who knew nothing about Ireland or the Irish, and a quantity of muskets, which the Irish soldiers had never been taught to use. Later he sent a few French gunners and an infantry corps, but insisted on having the same number of Irish infantry sent to him. His intervention ended in all the Irish infantry and cavalry too being sent to him, and so

France had much the best of the bargain. The reputation of the Irish Brigade in the service of France was very great and very Irish. "Your men, Lord Dillon," said the French king once, "give me more trouble than all the rest of my army." "Your Majesty," replied Lord Dillon calmly, "the enemy say precisely the same thing."

So far all these expeditions were of the same kind—a handful of men and some arms sent to engage English attention, while the government sending them settled matters of much more importance (as they believed) on the Continent. We now come to the one and only real attempt to detach Ireland from the British Empire and make her a place of arms entrenched between Great Britain and the rest of the world. The attempt was the work of one man, and, but for England's old allies, the winds and waves, and the French want of seamanship, it might have proved the most complete calamity she ever did or ever can suffer.

Theobald Wolfe Tone was, like nearly all the distinguished Irishmen of the eighteenth century, a person of no family and small fortune. His grandfather, a tenant and dependant of the Wolfes of Castle Warden—it was through this connection that Theobald received the name of Wolfe—left at his death some little property, which was squandered in a lawsuit between Theobald's father, Peter, and a younger brother. Theobald from his earliest youth seems to have been a headstrong and unruly boy; he wished to be a soldier, and resented his father's decision that he should be a lawyer. After being a second in a duel in which his principal's opponent was killed, and running away with a Miss Witherington, whose family held a much higher position than his, wasting a year or two in the Temple, London, and receiving £500 from his wife's grandfather, he was called to the Irish Bar, which he for the rest of his life heartily hated, and altogether neglected.

This does not seem a very promising beginning, but there must have been something particularly attractive about the young fellow. He quarrelled furiously with his wife's family, but his wife remained passionately devoted to him. He openly derided the law, but the lawyers regarded him with admiration. He was poor and a republican, but the rich and aristocratic cherished him. With all its faults, Irish society in the latter half of the eighteenth century had its virtues: one of these was a ready acceptance by it of ability and character. Wolfe Tone, the impecunious son of a bankrupt coachbuilder, was as a student and as a briefless barrister the intimate friend of the Duke of Leinster, the head of the nobility, and of John Hall Wharton, M.P., with his £14,000 a year.

Neglecting the law, in which he had made a very good beginning, Tone took to pamphlet-

eering. His writings, which from the first were highly "patriotic," attracted the attention of the Whigs. Their leader, George Ponsonby, tried to hire him as a party hack; but Tone was not to be hired, and Ponsonby never forgot or forgave what he regarded as high treason to him as King of the Patriots. Tone took his own way, which was not the way of the professional politician, and he was hated by the professional politician accordingly. It is interesting to note that the determined supporters of the English connection had always a kindly feeling in their hearts for this determined opponent of it. Of course, it is only natural that the men in earnest on each side should respect one another: we see it at this moment in the more or less mutual respect of Orangemen and Sinn Feiners, and their common contempt for the Home Rule make-believes. It is always so. "Robin and I are honest men," said an honest old Tory when the opposition Whigs were denouncing Sir Robert Walpole. "He is for King George and I am for King James; but you are only for yourselves." That was the view the uncompromising supporters of the English connection took of Wolfe Tone: he was against it, they were for it; but the Patriots were for themselves.

Tone was appointed secretary of the Catholic Committee after Richard Burke, the great Edmund's "nauseating son," had resigned the office in a huff. In that position Tone devoted himself to two objects. The one was to make the Committee representative of all and not merely of the aristocratic Catholics; the other to establish an anti-English alliance between the republican Presbyterians of the North and the rebel Catholics of the South. He succeeded to a marvel in both his objects. The democratisation of the Catholic Committee was permanent; but the union between North and South was unnatural and could not long exist. The Catholics of the South were very ignorant and very bigoted; the Presbyterians of the North were, as Arthur O'Connor informed C. J. Fox, probably the best-educated peasantry in Europe, and at that time liberal to a degree in their religious views. But different as these elements were, Tone contrived to combine them completely for the time.

Meanwhile the French Revolution had taken place, and war had broken out between France and England. As usual, the French Government looked to intervention in Ireland as a mode of embarrassing England. It sent to Ireland a clergyman called Jackson to investigate the state of things there. Jackson brought with him an English attorney called Cockayne. Jackson got into communication with Tone; but Tone did not like the presence of the English attorney. "This business," he said to Jackson, "is a thing for us Irishmen: an Englishman who engages in it must be a traitor one way or the other."

Would it be too much to ask the Englishmen who are now favouring the Sinn Feiners to remember and consider this sensible saying?

Cookayne proved a traitor to Jackson, and on his evidence Jackson was convicted of treason, and sank poisoned by himself in the dock. Cookayne tried also to implicate Wolfe Tone; and Tone admitted that, in spite of his distrust of the attorney, the latter knew enough to place his life in peril. It was the men who hated most bitterly his views who saved him. The Attorney-General, Fitzgibbon, the ablest of the pro-English party, and Marcus Beresford, the most powerful of it, both sheltered him and induced the Government to overlook his connection with the French enemy on condition that he left the country. It is worthy of notice that Grattan urged the Catholic Committee to dismiss him from the secretaryship; and Ponsonby threatened that, if he became Attorney-General, he would not deal with him as Fitzgibbon had done.

In the summer of 1795 Tone prepared for exile. He was a man who saw things as they were. When he found his fellow-conspirators following the French fashion, by calling one another citizen, he said in contempt: "Make yourselves free and call yourselves what you like; but you are no more citizens for shutting yourselves up in a room and calling yourselves by that name than you would be all peers and noblemen by calling each other, My lord." All the same, he was an Irishman, and as such could not help being a bit theatrical. When he was at Belfast, on his way to America, we find him and his Ulster friends posing as the William Tells of Ireland. Together they went to M'Arl's Fort—a lofty cliff on the top of the Cave Hill, which overlooks the capital of Ulster—and there swore never to relax their efforts until they had subverted the authority of England and asserted the independence of their native land.

On 13th June Tone and his family left Belfast in an American ship bound for Wilmington. Sea-travelling must at that time have been a far from pleasant business. The ship was only of 230 tons burden, and besides cargo and crew it carried 300 passengers. When off Newfoundland it was stopped by an English warship, which impressed all but one of the crew and fifty of the passengers. It reached Wilmington on 1st August, only one passenger, strange to say, having died on the voyage. A modern note is struck by Tone's first observation on America, which is that all the public-houses there are kept by captains and colonels. To this day the American Club in Paris is called by Frenchmen the "Colonels' Club."

Why the Irish Government did not, when it allowed Tone to expiate his treason by exile, require a pledge from him never again to enter into relations with the French, is a mystery which Tone himself

never could explain. But it did not, and in fact he lost no time in renewing those relations. At first the French showed little warmth, but gradually they melted; and at last, with some funds supplied by Ulster friends, and a letter of recommendation supplied by the French Ambassador in Philadelphia in his pocket, Tone, on 1st January 1796, set sail for France itself.

Tone's life and adventures in France during 1796 are revealed with great frankness in the diary he kept for the information and amusement of his wife. Perused without imagination, that work may be read as showing him a dissipated and mercurial person, now getting tipsy, now in very high spirits; now so depressed that he has not, as he says, heart enough even to write good nonsense. Perused with imagination, it gives the picture of a very remarkable man. There he was, an unknown unimportant individual in a strange land, the language of which he could not even speak, with, as he says, a couple of louis in his exchequer, negotiating with the French Government and planning Irish revolutions — and with this marvellous result, that in the end he forced the French Government to adopt his views, and came nearer effecting a revolution in Ireland than any other man ever came.

At first the French Government treated his notion of an expedition to Ireland in the traditional way. They proposed that Tone should go among the British prisoners and induce the Irishmen to volunteer for the expedition. Tone said plainly the project was damned nonsense: he went among the prisoners and secured sixty volunteers, ten of whom were Englishmen. Then they suggested sending these and a number of *chouannerie*, or, as Tone says, blackguards, to stir up disorder in Ireland. Tone said there was enough of that already there. Then they proposed to limit the force sent to two thousand men. Tone told them they might as well send twenty. At last he contrived to get in personal contact with Carnot, the organiser of victory, and General Hoche, the winner of it. They read his memorials and listened to his arguments; and they were convinced. Hoche declared that if they could rend Ireland from the British Empire they would have amputated England's right arm, and announced that he was prepared to lead an expedition for that purpose, and would only do so if it consisted of a powerful force properly equipped. Carnot undertook to provide such an army.

And now comes England's good fortune. An army and fleet were collected at Brest for the invasion of Ireland. The army consisted of fifteen thousand picked men, and they carried with them over forty thousand sets of arms, twenty field-guns, nine siege-guns, over sixty thousand barrels of powder, and over seven millions of cartridges; and their

commander was, next to Napoleon, the ablest officer in France. The fleet consisted of seventeen sail of the line, thirteen frigates, and thirteen transports. But the first admiral, Villaret Joyeuse, was so faint-hearted that Hoche had him removed, and his successor, Morard de Galles, was so incompetent that Hoche wished to abandon the expedition.

It was too late to do so, and on 15th December 1796 the expedition left Brest. Before it reached the open sea one of the men-of-war was run on the rocks and sunk. Hoche was with the Admiral, Tone was with the second-in-command of the fleet, Admiral Bouvet, and the second-in-command of the army, General Grouchy. On the 17th they sighted the Irish coast, but the fleet had got scattered, only eighteen out of the forty-three sail being visible from Admiral Bouvet's flagship. Fog set in on the 18th, and continued till the evening of the 19th, when twelve more sail were sighted. These were lost again before the morning. Seven again were sighted and lost again. Tone writes bitterly that probably this is the first case on record where an admiral contrived to lose his fleet twice in the same day. The eighteen ships with Bouvet lay unmolested and inanimate in Bantry Bay during the 20th and 21st. The sealed orders had been opened, and they were found to consist of directions in case of separation to cruise off Mizen Head for five days. The Admiral insisted that they must be obeyed. "And now," writes Tone passionately, "we have begun a cruise of five days in all its forms, and shall, in obedience to the letter of our instructions, ruin the expedition and destroy the remnant of the French navy with a precision and punctuality which will be truly edifying."

But Tone did not count on the intervention of England's old and faithful allies, the winds. On the 23rd more ships had arrived, and there were now ten in Bantry Bay and twenty outside it. The ship with Hoche was not among them, but on the 24th Grouchy declared his readiness to land. Tone was in the highest spirits, for the landing was to commence on the morrow. But a strong land wind arose and the landing was put off. On the next day the wind was stronger, and many of the ships dragged their anchors. On the following day the storm had become a hurricane. "All is over," writes Tone. On the 29th the ships that remained began their voyage back to France.

The failure was due entirely to the incapacity of the naval officers: the military officers seem to have been ready enough to disembark. "Why did I not throw Bouvet into the sea?" Grouchy exclaimed afterwards. If the leader of the expedition had been a Hoche or a Napoleon he would have done so. It was England's good fortune that he was a Grouchy.

If that French army had

been, as there was ample time for it to be, landed in Ireland, it could have marched to Dublin practically without opposition. The only force in the country were a very few regulars and a rabble of undisciplined yeomanry and militia, "dangerous," as Sir Ralph Abercromby afterwards said, "only to their friends." This was clearly shown two years later when General Humbert landed a thousand men at Killala Bay. He attacked five times his number of them at Castlebar, and they ran so quickly that the battle is known in Ireland to this day as the Castlebar Races. He marched about the country as he pleased for a time, and it was only when Cornwallis had collected twenty thousand of the yeomanry and militia, that he ventured to oppose him.

Besides this, in the North, at any rate, there were tens of thousands of disaffected Scots who had served in the Volunteers, and were well drilled and more determined. All they wanted was the arms which the French transports carried to make them a formidable foe. With their aid England's rule in Ireland must for a time, at any rate, have come to an end, and no one can guess how long that time would have been, or what would have been its results.

Tone came back to France, broken in heart but not broken in spirit. He set about agitating for a new expedition. Hoche remained his friend and supporter, but shortly Hoche died. Then he turned his attention to Napoleon, now returned from his Italian wars covered with glory. Napoleon affected to favour a new expedition. He began to form a new army of England, in which Tone received a commission. But Tone from the first was convinced that he had some other project on hand, and when he saw the best battalions of the Army of England sent to the south of France, he guessed what that new project was. At length Napoleon himself went there, and carried off the soldiers of France to perish among the sands of Syria.

In the early summer of 1798 Ireland rose in rebellion. Tone passionately besought the French Government to send the rebels aid, but it was only in the late autumn that aid was sent. It was then too late, even if the aid sent had been substantial, and it was in fact in the traditional style. The rebellion had been crushed completely, both in the North and South, and North and South, moreover, were no longer united. In the North the rebellion of the Protestants had been purely political; in the South the rebellion of the Catholics had turned out to be almost as purely religious. The Ulstermen were infuriated by the tales of the massacres of their co-religionists, and from being rebels and liberals were beginning to become Unionists and Orangemen.

On the 20th of September 1798 Tone sailed once more

from Brest to invade Ireland. This time the force which he accompanied only numbered three thousand men. The expedition reached Lough Swilly only on the 10th of October: again the winds were England's faithful allies. Before the soldiers could be landed the flotilla was attacked by a British fleet under Admiral Borlase. It resisted for four hours. The French General wished Tone to escape in a very swift schooner, *La Biche;* but he refused to do so. On the surrender of the French he was landed among the other prisoners, recognised, taken to Dublin, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be hanged as a traitor.

All that Tone claimed was to be shot as a soldier. This was refused. In the hope of delaying his execution at any rate, Curran applied to the head of the family from which Tone took the name of Wolfe —Lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice — for a *habeas corpus*, on the ground that as the King's courts were open, trial by court-martial was illegal. The court granted the writ, the military refused to obey it; the court ordered their arrest for contempt, and so matters stood when it was announced that Tone, to escape what he regarded as a shameful death, had cut his throat in prison. On the 19th of November he died. And so perished, in his thirty-sixth year, the man who, without family, fortune, position, or authority, contrived to place the British Empire in more imminent and deadly jeopardy than ever did the great Napoleon.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE FIG-TREE.

How does it feel to meet a skeleton in a lonely moonlit forest-path, to chat, and eventually walk home together in the most friendly way? Such a question might seem the prelude to a sensational ghost-story, yet an adventure of the kind actually happened to myself, and it was startling enough at the moment. Even now the remembrance of the grim thing as I saw it in the gloom of an Indian fig-tree, sitting between the moonlight and the black of a tropical night, the thrill of watching it rise to its fleshless feet, and the awe of standing face to face, and of knowing that there was not within many miles another human being to witness so strange a meeting, rise very vividly to my mind. I had been out all day in a distant part of the tea estates under my care in a lonely district of Madras, and started to walk home to camp in the forest just as darkness was coming on. That is always a brief season in the East. No sooner is the great red sun down behind the hills than the crimson flush in the sky pales to lavender and purple, the stars come out, and the hush of approaching night quickly falls upon everything.

If darkness follows twilight so quickly in the open, it is even more rapid in the forest, where the branches of the trees meet overhead in a dense canopy unbroken for miles at a time. My path lay through such a tract of woodland that evening, and hardly had I set out upon it when the last rays of the sun went off the topmost leaves, a soft mist began to rise from the ground, and every object faded quickly into the gathering gloom. Fortunately I knew the trail very well, and a full moon, which was getting up, would soon help to make the way easier. I was wearing the ordinary flannel clothing of a sahib in the hot weather, and had nothing with me but a white umbrella, for, though the district was full of wild beasts of all kinds, one gets out of the way of thinking much about them in India. So I strode light-heartedly along for the first two or three miles, meditating more on supper than anything else, the while I listened to the occasional hooting of an owl or the cry of a sleepy monkey awakened by bad dreams somewhere away in the tops of the distant thickets. It was certainly very lonely, and I was now in the most solitary part of the walk, about midway between my starting-point and the still distant camp. No human being existed in these deserted back-lands, and their stillness in the hush of the night-time was overwhelming. The moon, however, was presently up, shining in tropical splendour

overhead, and I was glad of it, for the narrow path had been difficult to keep in the darkness. A few minutes more walking and the trees became scattered as an open space was reached, the moonshine began to come down in patches, and I felt cooler air as a welcome change to the humid stillness of the jungle behind. In front lay a stretch of bare rocky ground, silver in the shine from above, ending abruptly two hundred yards beyond in the shadows of a giant fig-tree, under whose boughs the track passed. To the vampire bats, flitting here and there like bad spirits in that oasis of light, I must have looked a brilliant object in my white flannels as I crossed in the full glare of the moonshine; but though they flapped round my head so close that I could feel the draught of their leathery wings, I pushed on and into the darkness beyond. There all was bare ground, since nothing would grow in such deep shade, and the many descending branches of the tree gave the impression of the cloisters of a church.

Looking at the main trunk for a minute, I was surprised to see something sitting up against it with its back to the bark and quite motionless. And when I had had another stare, I was still more surprised to see that that thing was the skeleton of a man! Its skull was sunk upon its chest-bone, its hands were by its sides, its legs straight out in front; a long bamboo staff lay close to the knees, and nothing clothed the grim anatomy of the bones but the usual loin-cloth worn by natives. "The thing" was not more than thirty yards away, and it was undoubtedly startling to come upon it so suddenly. But I had seen many dead men in strange places, and this poor wretch had doubtless been robbed and murdered, or had lost his way and died of starvation there, just as he sat. By this time my eyes were getting more accustomed to the darkness again, and I went a few paces nearer to look at that dreadful object. It was now only a dozen strides from me, and I could see every rib and bone, every joint and angle, of the dead man's framework. Think, therefore, with what a start of incredulous surprise I jumped a pace backwards when, as I looked, the figure slowly and deliberately drew its knees up to its chin, and still more slowly lifted its head! It was impossible; the shifting moonlight on the black floor of the forest must have confused me: a man dead for months, his bones picked clean by crows and hill-foxes, to move his legs about like that,—it was not to be thought of! I frowned at my own foolishness, and looked again. I looked and looked, and there under my very eyes the skeleton was getting upon its feet. There was no possibility of mistake now. It was getting on to its feet laboriously but steadily,

and in another minute was up and standing erect, the fleshless white framework of a man outlined vividly against the black of the big tree-trunk and the murk of the jungle beyond. Then he turned full to me, and though my heart beat a little, as I suppose any one's would have done under the circumstances, I turned on him likewise to see it out.

For several minutes, though it seemed much longer, we stood face to face across the narrow strip of jungle path, I cudgelling my brains to find some reasonable explanation of a thing so impossible, and the figure apparently taking stock of me with uncomfortable intentness. Then he came a step forward, and it must be confessed I should have very much liked to go one backwards. But that would have been useless, even if retreating had been to my fancy. So I tightened my grip on my umbrella-handle, and stood my ground resolutely. With a slow shuffling walk the thing came towards me until it was only a few paces away, and that seemed quite near enough.

"Stop," I said, holding up my hand—"stop, and say who you are and what you want."

My voice sounded unnatural in the deep stillness of the woodlands, and it disturbed a little brown owl in the branches overhead. He dropped from his perch, and with a ghostly hoot swept, shadow-like, between us on his way to the open glen behind. The skeleton stopped as I bid it, but not for a moment had I supposed it would really answer my question. It was therefore with a renewed thrill that I saw its jaws begin to move—the thing was about to speak, and I awaited with amazed curiosity to know what the being would say.

"Then, from those cavernous eyes,
Pale fires seemed to rise
As when the Northern skies
Gleam in December;
And, like the water's flow
Under December's snow,
Came a dull voice of woe
From the heart's chamber."

And now, with a deep salaam, both hands pressed to its forehead, the dweller in the shadows bowed low and mumbled in Hindustani—

"Protector of the poor, help of the friendless, will the sahib deign to let me bask in his radiance?"

A civil skeleton at all events, I thought to myself, and as there was obviously more to come I nodded and said, "How can I help you, friend?" Then, to my surprise, with another low bow the figure asked for food and money. What a quaint idea! why, food would be useless to such a cavernous interior; and as for money—a coin for Charon would be the utmost such a being might want. But the figure was obviously serious, and looking closely at him all on a sudden the truth began to dawn on me. "Stand there in that patch of light," I said, and

after a moment's hesitation the thing moved obediently into a pool of moonlight on the ground. There he stood with his hands crossed on his breast, and I went up and examined him carefully. He made a fine show gleaming there in the dazzle, which brought up his adornments in vivid white while everything else was in inky blackness; but the secret was out—he was a real man of flesh and blood, a wandering fakir, or begging devotee, who by way of expressing his sanctity had painted, with clay and wood ashes, an exact counterpart of every joint and bone of his anatomy on his dusky exterior. The work was excellently done, and as his natural shape was quite invisible in the dusk of the trees, I had been completely deceived.

"Why," I said, "brother, you are solid man after all. I thought you must be when you said you were hungry. But what a way to get yourself up: you might have frightened somebody!"

"Not the sahib," he replied politely — "night and day, good spirits and bad are alike to the sahib."

"Hum!" I said, "that is as it may be. How long have you been sitting here alone in the gloom?"

"A day or two, sahib."

"Good heavens! and what have you eaten, and what have you been doing all that time?"

"A little rice from my waist-cloth for food, and meditation for occupation, was enough until your munificence came shining down the path," he answered.

"Fakir," I said, "I respect your abstinence greatly, and fear you get through more thinking in a week-end than I in a year. Nevertheless it would be a pity to turn that interesting diagram on your skin into actual fact, so you had better come to the tents and have some food. If you will get behind me—not too close—you can follow down to the camp and have a bed in the stables, and as much food as you can eat." The fakir was delighted, and we strode away, a queer-looking couple, conversing as we went, until suddenly through the distant tree-stems there came the warm gleam of fire-lights and those odours of burning cow-dung and cooking rice which are inevitable where natives are camped.

When eventually we reached those hospitable red beacons my dogs knew of my coming first, and poured out in a tumultuous pack to welcome the returning master. But his companion was more than some of them could stand. The timid ones fairly fled at a sight of the weird figure behind, while the more courageous, after a start of surprise, with bristling hair and showing teeth, manifested their disgust unmistakably. Even my butler-wallah, who followed at their heels, staggered back for a moment to see me saunter into the firelight with a cheerful skeleton carrying my umbrella snugly

tucked under its arm, as attendant.

I hope the apparition enjoyed his supper that evening, professed anchorite though he was, as much as I did. He seemed to, for when I caught a glance of him just before turning in to my tent for the night, he was sitting in the centre of a ring of admiring natives, eating rice and curried fish with extraordinary enthusiasm, while he recounted in brief intervals the tale of his wanderings, and above all, the meeting with the "ohik deree," who took him for a dead man in the shadow of the fig-tree, and would not alter his opinion until he had turned him well round and round under the moonlight and heard him speak. Wah! that was wonderful, and the fakir took some more rice, and the man in the background beat a low approving measure on his goatskin drum, while all the rest of the encircling natives nodded sleepily as they meditated on the adventure.

EDWIN L. ARNOLD.

A FORETASTE.

BY AN IRISHWOMAN.

THE neighbourhood of Gortnacool, the remote country place where I live with my people, is fairly quiet on the whole, though Sinn Fein is rampant in the post-town of Dunreagh. Still it had never troubled us much, and we had always been on good terms with the working people, the tradesmen from whom we obtained our supplies, and the men in our employment. Consequently it was all the more surprising suddenly to find ourselves the victims of a peculiar persecution, which masqueraded under the name of "strike," though almost all the usual characteristics of a strike were missing.

I think the actual beginning of the whole business dates as far back as the Rebellion of 1916. At that time we had had for some months a chauffeur called Horgan, a clever hard-working man just over military age. Ireland being then under martial law, one could not ordinarily use one's car, but one day I was given a special permit to motor to Inchbeg (which is about 20 miles from Gortnacool) on business.

At Inchbeg Bridge we were challenged and stopped, while soldiers belonging to the English regiment guarding the bridge searched the car for arms and ammunition.

It was just after we had started again, and were wriggling past the zigzags of barbed wire and the other obstacles on the bridge, that Horgan leaped suddenly to a high place in my esteem.

He said: "I never thought to see a German-Front in Ireland, and the grand British Army bothered by dirty Sinn Fein tinkers, and me own poor brother facing death in Flanders this minute," and he wiped his eyes with his cuff.

Until then I had never spoken to him about the War, or the Rebellion; from that day I talked freely, and abused the Sinn Feiners as warmly as I praised the Allied armies, believing him to be firm on the right side.

My high opinion of him was confirmed a year or so later, when he begged to be moved from the cottage he had occupied ever since entering our employment. The families in the adjacent cottages were Sinn Feiners, he said, and they "annoyed him with their talk." So my father, always ready to help a loyalist, gave him the lodge at our front gate which chanced to be unoccupied.

All through the winter of 1917-18, when the Sinn Feiners were inaugurating their campaign of raiding for arms, Horgan used to give me interesting detailed accounts of the raids before they appeared in

the newspapers. In the spring of 1918 my father sent his firearms to the police station, for he naturally was unwilling to risk a raid, or put it in the power of Sinn Feiners to use his guns for shooting down British soldiers. Horgan, with a grave face, informed me it was a pity the master had parted with the guns, for the Sinn Feiners were "raging mad" about it. They had hoped for a good haul, he said.

Some time later, to my amusement, he announced that our family were on the "Black List," because my father by chance had been able to give the authorities some useful information. I was surprised, as well as amused, for I could not imagine how the fact could have reached Sinn Fein ears. However, I just laughed, and said we did not mind being on the "Black List" of a set of cowards and traitors.

"Take care, miss, take care!" exclaimed Horgan. "Ye'll draw their edge on ye. And no matter if they strike slowly, they'll strike sure, and they'll strike hard."

I glanced at him. His usual bland and respectful expression had vanished, and though he gazed straight at his own boots, his eyes showed a smouldering fanatic light. A vague suspicion crept into my mind. I dimissed it instantly as unfounded and unjust.

. . . . . .

We were at breakfast one morning in the early autumn of 1919 when a little procession passed the windows. It was led by Horgan, holding a bunch of keys ostentatiously at arm's length. Close behind him were Leahy the gardener, and his wife, while Flavin and Daly, the farm men, followed hesitatingly, casting sheepish sidelong glances at the windows.

These people were all that the war had left in our employment. They were over military age, and had worked for my family respectively four, eleven, seventeen, and forty-five years.

My father, on finishing his breakfast, went to the hall door, thinking they had come for instructions in stacking the oats, but to his surprise Horgan, after a rambling speech on the rights of the working man, handed over his keys. Completely mystified, my father asked for an explanation.

Horgan replied, "You got your notice some time ago. We are all going on strike."

"I have had no notice," said my father; "why are you going on strike?" Horgan was silent.

"Do you want higher wages?"

No answer.

"If so, how much do you want?"

No answer.

Then I joined in. "What are you all here for?" I asked, looking from one to another. At this Horgan spoke. "We are going on strike," he said in a low sullen voice. "Ye had fair warning. We gave ye every chance. Now it will be a fight to a finish."

"This is ridiculous," I said; "there can be no strike without knowing what you are striking for. Any one who wishes for higher wages is entitled to ask for them—or to find another place. What you are doing is not only silly but unfair, and no good can come of it."

My eyes wandered round the little group as I spoke, and noted nearest to me Horgan gazing fixedly at his boots, with the same smouldering fanatic look I had seen once before. Beyond him the Leahys stood in defiant attitudes, and farther back were Flavin and Daly with shame and dejection evident in every line of their faces.

I was turning to go in, when Leahy, with a sudden bound, placed himself in front of me. He shook his fist in my face and poured forth violent abuse. My class had "downed" his for years, and robbed him and his; now his turn had come, and he would get it all back again! This and much more, accompanied by flashing eyes and threatening gestures, while his wife joined in with shrill vituperations.

Nothing that has ever happened to me was more amazing than this attack. The Leahys had been with us many years and had always seemed quiet respectable people, professedly devoted to "the family." They were receiving the wages they themselves asked for; they had always been treated with kindness and consideration. Certainly Leahy was a bad-tempered man, but it would have been impossible to have supposed he could forget himself to such an extent.

However, there was no use saying anything to him while in this mood, so I stepped past him into the house and shut the door.

At midday I walked down to the cottage where Flavin lived. A high fence and thicket of blackthorns encloses the little yard and completely hides it from the adjoining bohereen. I strolled into the yard and stood absently gazing at the pig-sty.

Soon, as I anticipated, the cottage door was gently opened, and Flavin, glancing furtively about him, came out. I asked him if he could explain the "strike." Beneath the sheltering fence he told me in a low voice that he and Daly were miserable and ashamed at playing such a "dirty game," but that Horgan had forced them into it. "Sure Horgan was mad for a strike this good while, and he telling us we'd be turned out of the union if we didn't back him; and for the matther of that, meself and Daly never wanted to join the union at all, only for Horgan saying we'd get no work annywhere if we didn't. Them unions has the country destroyed entirely—though indeed, miss, 'tis not the union that's in it this time at all."

He paused significantly, then, coming a step nearer—

"God help me! I'd be apt

to lose me life if they knew I was after telling ye. *'Tis a Sinn Fein business,"* he whispered.

The sound of footsteps on the bohereen cut short his confidences. He faded away, as it were, into his own pigsty, but not before I had extracted an assurance that he would return to his work at once; and "the divil roast any one who would be laying a hand on him to prevent him."

Leahy was walking up the bohereen towards his cottage when I left Flavin's yard. Judging by the set of his shoulders, he was either brooding over his fancied wrongs or bitterly ashamed of his recent behaviour. I hoped the latter might be the case, for I had resolved to try and bring him to reason.

He reached the gate leading to his cottage only just before me, and at that moment Mrs Leahy, who must have seen me coming, rushed out with a red flag tied to a broomstick, which she shook threateningly at me. Her husband turned abruptly, showing a fierce and scowling face, and I felt at once I should do no good with either of them.

I did say, though, by way of warning, that if they refused to work they would be dismissed, and must leave the house. Leahy yelled that if we wanted to turn him out we should have to get the "English military," and then he would fight them, and "drive pikes through their bodies."

"Your day is done," he concluded ferociously, "and the workers will take what they want."

As I walked home I reflected that though the "strike" might have a Sinn Fein foundation, there was a distinct aroma of Bolshevism about it.

The next surprise was launched on us in the afternoon by the cook, who summoned me to the foot of the backstairs, ostensibly to say that she had "promised God ere yestherday to flavour the rabbits with a dash of curry powder." She then explained solemnly that this promise must unavoidably be broken, for the grocer's cart (and the curry powder) had failed to come. She added as an afterthought, with a fine assumption of indifference, that she supposed the household need expect no more food, because Horgan had declared we were to be boycotted, and that no cart, van, or messenger would venture into the place. He had actually told the servants this early in the morning, shewing that the whole plan was prearranged.

In Ireland one must never appear disconcerted before one's dependants. There was nothing for it but to laugh contemptuously, and await developments.

A couple of days passed uneventfully. Horgan and Leahy kept out of sight. Flavin, though he came to work as usual, seemed depressed and apprehensive, and brought a

message from Daly that the old man would be "in dread of his life to come near the place."

My people were unconvinced by Flavin's Sinn Fein theory, and indeed there seemed no evidence to support it. Horgan had always impressed them with his soundness and loyalty, and though his present conduct seemed inexplicable, it was hard to believe that he had suddenly joined the rebels. They were also sceptical about the boycott.

Nevertheless the grocer's cart failed unaccountably to appear, in spite of repeated assurances by telephone from the manager that we should receive our provisions in "an hour or two at the latest."

On the third day our store of food was decidedly low. The baker's cart had not come, neither had the butcher's. The jarvey cars refused to convey parcels to us. The laundress sent word that she could no longer take our washing, and the coal-store telephoned that they had no coal for us just at present.

In the evening Flavin, white as a sheet and almost in tears, told us that he had been set upon by Horgan and Leahy and their friends waving red flags, and threatening to "pull him down and beat him," so he dared not come to work any more. Also he said he had overheard talk of cutting the telephone wire.

Short of food and in darkness (for there was nobody to work the electric-light engine, and there were no candles in the house), we got through another night. Next day, reduced literally to our last crust, we had to face the fact that apart from the house servants there was nobody to do a hand's turn of work. Matters reached a climax when, on trying to use the telephone, we discovered that the wire was cut.

My people and I held a hurried consultation, and decided to apply to the police. One could not go on without food, and entirely cut off from the outside world. Moreover, there was always the possibility of accidents or illness without means even of sending for the doctor. To tell the truth, I didn't quite like the look of things that day, and my people were decidedly worried. I determined to make my way in to Dunreagh, and explain the situation myself to the District Inspector.

You will wonder, perhaps, why we didn't ask our friends for help. You see, we were still in doubt as to the real cause of our troubles, and, for all we knew, by asking for help we might have exposed our friends to similar unpleasantness. You cannot, in Ireland, help a boycotted person without running the risk of being boycotted yourself.

I set off for Dunreagh, hoping I might not fall in with Horgan and Leahy and their red flags. Luck favoured me, for they were nowhere to be seen. On reaching Dun-

reagh I went straight to the District Inspector's house and laid the whole case before him. He took me to the police station to consult the Head Constable. We went in through a small high-walled courtyard at the back of the building. The main-door is never used now, for it is overlooked by some gardens, and consequently is considered unsafe. The District Inspector showed me into a corner room on the top floor, and left me while he fetched the Head Constable. Near the one small window which faced out to sea a policeman sat at a typewriter. He rose politely on seeing me, and I exclaimed at the fine view. His reply was characteristic of the times and country. He said—

"Indeed, 'tis a grand *safe* view. Not a one could be shot in this room, except, maybe, from an aeroplane."

When the District Inspector reappeared with the Head Constable, I went over all that had happened during the last few days, omitting only Flavin's confidences.

The Head Constable was by no means surprised at Horgan having made trouble.

"But," I pointed out, "he was getting good wages, and everything else he asked for—why should he have gone on strike?"

"It is not a genuine strike," he said; "as I understand it, the plan is to make things uncomfortable for you as gentry and loyalists. The better Horgan succeeds in this the more credit he will win in Sinn Fein ranks. You may believe me, he is a deliberate organiser of trouble. He has attended every Sinn Fein meeting for the last two years. He is a red-hot Sinn Feiner himself and a thorough scoundrel!"

I was fairly astonished at this, and I remembered uncomfortably how I used to discuss the war and Sinn Fein with him. I remember, too, the vague suspicions I had smothered from time to time.

During the discussion that followed, the District Inspector offered us police protection, which I refused, as it seemed too ridiculous. All I wanted was help in procuring food, that the telephone should be repaired, and that the police should ring us up morning and evening to ascertain if the wire was intact.

The District Inspector promised to provide a police escort if I could find a vehicle to take out supplies. Meanwhile he would make further inquiries and would meet me at the hotel an hour later. I went round the shops and bought food. The shopowners, with whispered apologies for having "disappointed" us, personally attended to me. Screened from their assistants by cases of goods and half-opened doors, they explained that every one in their employment belonged to the "organisation," and that they, the employers, were practically powerless. As for the assistants themselves, formerly civil in the extreme,

they behaved as though I were invisible! I realised that they also were in the grip of the "organisation," besides probably being all afraid of one another!

Eventually when I assembled my parcels at the hotel, the District Inspector met me with the information that he had failed to find any means of conveying them to Gortnacool.

He was obliged to hurry back to the police station, leaving me to manage as best I could. While I stood rather disconsolately on the hotel steps, wondering how I was to carry out some dozen loaves, a stone of flour, a hind-quarter of mutton, and groceries of all sorts, the military ambulance passed up the street. Instantly I had an inspiration, and rushing to the telephone rang up the military hospital. It was impossible to explain the situation for fear of being overheard, but on grasping that I was in difficulties at the Dunreagh Hotel, and wanted the ambulance, the P.M.O. lost no time in coming down himself,—after which all went smoothly.

Before starting for home I looked in at the police station to tell them of my arrangements.

The sergeant admitted me to the courtyard, and I was beginning to give my message when a middle-aged man wearing dark tweed clothes and a panama hat crossed the yard and intervened almost peremptorily.

"The sun is hot out here," he said, "you would be more comfortable inside."

He rapped on the door of the barrack, which opened instantly. Inside, with the door closed, he apologised. "It was unsafe to talk outside," he said. "Even that courtyard is unsafe. Perhaps you did not notice a young man wearing a grey cap standing in the corner? Well, he asked for admission on some pretext just as you came to the gate. He is a spy."

I looked at him, bewildered. The sergeant murmured, "Head-Constable Dash—the plain-clothes man," and I understood.

"Miss Blank," went on the detective, "I must urge you to be careful. *You cannot be too careful.* I have been making inquiries, and—well, these are queer times."

The District Inspector then joined us.

"I have despatched a party of police to Gortnacool," he said. "I know you did not wish it, but from information since received I decided you must have protection."

Of course there was nothing to be said to this, especially when the detective added—

"You must have the police living in the house. Things may take a serious turn at any moment. It may be necessary to have a strong force out there to-morrow."

Feeling pleasantly thrilled, I stowed myself and my parcels in the ambulance and started for home, accompanied by the P.M.O. and some R.A.M.C.

orderlies, who were just longing for a scrap with the Sinn Feiners!

Nothing happened, however, though we met the enemy and their Bolshevik flags, and had to pass under a big red flag which, with amazing insolence, they had hoisted over our front gate.

Next day the news of our predicament had spread through the neighbourhood, and many kind friends came to Gortnacool offering help and bringing food. They scorned all risk of the boycott being extended to them, declaring that if the worst came to the worst we should all fight together, and the country would be the better for it in the long-run. Indeed, our friends were splendid, and but for their help we could never have obtained enough food. The police, when boycotted, can draw supplies from the Army Service Corps, but this source is closed to civilians. In fact, the law of the land makes it possible for civilian loyalists to be starved to death at the bidding of any disaffected person.

Our daily bread being ensured, we settled down to a new sort of existence, which, so far as I was concerned, though strenuous, was by no means unamusing. Each day it was my business to pick vegetables and water all the plants—three frames of tomatoes and cucumbers, three houses of tomatoes, one of peaches, and one of mixed plants, over 100 chrysanthemums, and about 100 other plants placed about in sheltered spots to keep cool. Then there was the ripe fruit to be picked, the over-ripe to be cleared off, and windfalls to be collected. The drinking-tubs for cattle and horses in the fields required refilling, and this meant catching the farm mare, harnessing her, filling the water-butt, and taking the cart up the hill to the fields. I was clumsy at first. Twice I upset the cart turning corners in the steep and narrow bohereen. Several times I was walked upon and nearly knocked down, and my arms and shoulders are still all over bruises from the mare's teeth, for she is a bad-tempered animal, and never lost an opportunity of biting me.

The police were always to the fore. Two of them, with loaded revolvers and fourteen rounds of ammunition, accompanied one everywhere. At first it was amusing. One felt like royalty. As time went on, one felt more like a prisoner; and when the days grew shorter, and one could never go for a stroll in the dusk without hearing the heavy steady footsteps following, I began to realise what a lunatic guarded by his keepers must feel like!

At night two constables sat on the smoking-room window-sill. I used to hear their voices through my sleep. Towards 3 A.M. the sergeant went round with an electric torch. During meals two would stroll about near the dining-room

windows—in fact, for weeks on end I don't think we were ever out of sight or hearing of the R.I.C.

Meanwhile, Horgan having failed in his attempt to starve us, set to work to be as unpleasant as possible. He sent word that Mrs Flavin would no longer be allowed to milk the cows, and that he had arranged that our harvest was "to be left to rot in the fields." The servants received a note from him ordering them, in threatening language, to leave our service at once.

They took no notice, so on Sunday when they went to Mass, he followed them, waving a red flag, shouting abuse, and doing his utmost to terrify them. The police served a notice upon him to leave his house, and he announced that he recognised no Court except a Sinn Fein one, and no laws except those of the Irish Republic. He was warned that he would be evicted, and replied that he would fight.

One morning shortly after this the Head Constable came to interview me. He asked me to suggest to my father that he should make an attempt to come to terms with Horgan and end the boycott. I was dead against it. Indeed, I saw no possibility of making terms with a man who first had refused to state his demands, and then had deliberately embarked upon a course of malice and intimidation. The Head Constable suggested that perhaps I did not realise what we should have to face if we held out. He reeled off a number of inconveniences and annoyances which he had heard were to be inflicted upon us. No servant or workman was to be allowed into the place. A strict boycott was to be maintained for a whole year, during which time we should be dependent upon our friends for food. We should be unable to have any washing done, or to get any coal. These were among the minor annoyances. What was more serious was that Horgan had a powerful organisation behind him, which would stick at nothing. The Dunreagh branch of Sinn Fein was daily increasing in strength and audacity. Even now it was unsafe for the police reliefs to come to Gortnaceol at regular hours. There were several spots along the road where they could be ambushed and shot. It would be necessary to tell off a force to live here permanently, and thus avoid coming and going at stated hours. As time went on matters might become more and more serious. The hay might be set on fire. The cattle might be mutilated. There might even be a loss of life to others than the police, for, as he delicately put it, Sinn Feiners seldom hesitate to use firearms.

It was indeed a horrid position, and one could not help feeling discouraged and even alarmed at the prospect. Yet I could see no possibility of a satisfactory compromise. Apart from the loss of prestige to our class—a loss which would mean more in Ireland

than in other countries—it seemed to me that in the long-run any compromise would only expose us to renewed and aggravated persecution. It would be an admission of helplessness before Sinn Fein. Moreover, it might encourage men of Horgan's type to follow his bad example and stir up similar trouble in other places.

When I told the Head Constable that I could not bear the thought of giving in, and that I meant to urge my people to hold out at all costs, he said I was quite right. He had been ordered to put the worst possible consequences before me, but secretly hoped we would be firm, for the sake of showing Horgan and his confederates that they could not intimidate us.

I felt very glad he had spoken to me first instead of to my people, for it would only have worried them, and to no purpose. Yet when I thought matters over that night, it was dreadful to realise that I had, on my own, refused to consider the possibility of compromise, and decided on a course which might entail loss of life.

However, the matter was settled, and there was nothing for it but to go on.

Next morning I got up very early, and let myself out of the sitting-room window. The police were at the other side of the house, and did not see me. I made my way up to the fields, feeling very free at being unguarded for once! It was a perfect morning—all blue and fresh and keen, with dew sparkling upon the grass, and strings of sparkling cobwebs on the bushes—the last swallows flashing through the clear air, and an early thrush trying his voice amid a chorus of robins. The ugly threat of firearms which had haunted me all night seemed to melt away into the region of utter impossibility. I sat on a fence, with the horses exploring the pockets of my overall for sugar, and felt convinced that, in the long-run, all Horgan's plans would be frustrated.

Before long Mrs Flavin appeared. On catching a glimpse of me between the thorn-bushes she gave a start, for, being short-sighted, she thought Horgan or his friends were lying in wait for her. She went back into the bohereen, and then reappeared armed with a big stick, her face set and grim. You can fancy her relief at finding me, instead of, possibly, an armed Sinn Feiner!

I explained that I wanted to learn to milk, and when we had driven the cows down to the yard she gave me a lesson. I did not get on well that morning, but after two or three attempts there was decided improvement. However, in a few days Mrs Flavin pointed out that there really was no need for me to learn.

"They'll not stop me coming to milk unless they take a gun and shoot me," she said.

It just shows what determination can achieve. In spite of endless threats from Horgan, that old woman never

missed a day, and is still going on quite undisturbed.

Another week or two went by, and Horgan and Leahy finding themselves unable to starve or terrorise us, sent word they were placing the matter in the hands of the solicitor of their union. A few days later it transpired that the union had refused to help them. The solicitor told them they were "d——d fools," and had no case—thus proving the Sinn Fein origin of the whole business, which the police and Flavin had throughout insisted upon.

However, the two men still refused to leave their houses, so in due time the eviction took place. Leahy, whose Bolshevik mood had been succeeded by a deep depression, went quietly enough, but Horgan was very truculent. He told the Head Constable that he and his friends would picket the place for a year, and give us no peace day or night, and that he was going to pitch a tent at our gate and live in it to his dying day! He actually went as far as to light a fire on the kept grass just outside the gate and make a gipsy encampment, but next day the weather suddenly turned cold, and he disappeared. I hear he has not troubled to look for another situation, for having abundantly proved his hatred and malice towards loyalists, he expects shortly an influential (and lucrative) post in the government of the Irish Republic!

After the eviction things became much easier. There was no more tampering with our water supply; the glen stream was never again diverted from its course, nor the catch-tank drained and filled with large stones and mud. Every day I had the satisfaction of finding the beasts in their own fields, and, what I appreciated most of all, the water-tubs were untouched. For some time before the eviction they used to be tipped over and emptied an hour after I had laboriously filled them. These were mean little annoyances, and made one laugh sometimes simply because they were so petty, yet they added considerably to the day's work.

The police remained at Gortnacool for some weeks, and still come out occasionally to see how we are getting on, though none of the worst threats have materialised, and indeed the boycott has gradually evaporated.

Things are scarcely normal yet, but the shops send us food; and, best of all, the laundress has decided she can receive our washing without risk of instant death.

There is one serious sting left. The manager of the Dunreagh coal store is a prominent Sinn Feiner, and refuses to give us any coal.[1]

[1] Since writing this the manager has been arrested and deported, and loyalists are revelling in the good fires they ought to have had during the winter.—March 1920.

For weeks past we have been wearing outdoor clothes in the house, and shivering over inadequate turf-fires. The coal-controller will not allow us to change our dealer, or we might be supplied by Messrs X——, a loyalist firm in Inchbeg.

Now that things have quieted down, I have learned why the plain-clothes Head Constable was so insistent upon police protection for us. The farmers' wives in the neighbourhood tell me that Horgan went round all their houses with red flags, urging the men to accompany him to Gortnacool and demonstrate. He told them such proceedings were becoming fashionable everywhere, and that the time had come to "down the quality" and clear a way for the Irish Republic!

Whether, in the main, this programme was altogether distasteful to them I have not discovered. It is evident, though, that they resented the idea of carrying it out at the bidding of a comparative stranger like Horgan, and one and all say it would be unthinkable so to treat "gintry who were *rared in the neighbourhood.*"

According to the women, every one far and near prayed day and night that the devil would take Horgan and Leahy and put them in his choice place!

For my part, I heartily echo that prayer, and would like it extended to include all Sinn Feiners.

"THE REGULATIONS."

THE strength of the red tape by which the ordinary European official is bound is proverbial. But its strength is as a piece of cotton compared to the anchor-chain of the latest Dreadnought when placed side by side with the deep, dark, blood-red material which fetters and binds the limbs, the very brain, of the Indian babu. He lives for it, he dies for it. Can we blame him? Who has taught him to shiver with fear at the thought of the setting aside of a single letter of the "Regulations"? They have no spirit, these "Regulations." They are there in black and white.

This red-tape disease takes a very virulent form in some of the smaller Indian post-offices. I was once talking to a babu postmaster on a Sunday morning. The office had closed a few minutes previously. A very tired youth came in and asked for a farthing stamp. He wanted it for a post-card which he was sending to his mother, who had gone off on a pilgrimage. He had come in a distance of some five or six miles to get his stamp. "Come to-morrow; the office is closed to-day," said the babu. On the table in front of us were numbers of stamps of the required amount, and I pointed out to the babu that it would give him no trouble to hand one over. It was useless; and the answer to all my remarks was, "It is contrary to the 'Regulations.'" Rather than infringe those terrible "Regulations," he would send the unfortunate youth back to his home without his farthing stamp. Luckily I had one myself, which I handed over to him.

Now for my story of how we got round the "Regulations" and outwitted the babu, though we nearly caused his death in doing so. X and I, in the course of a shooting trip in the Himalayas, came across a main trade route along which ran a line of telegraph- and post-offices. Before starting, we knew that we should strike this road somewhere, and had left instructions that our letters should be sent to Jhatri, a place twenty miles north of Doraha, where we had joined the road. They were to await our arrival at Jhatri up till a certain date, and if not taken delivery of they were then to be returned. We settled ourselves comfortably in the small rest-house at Doraha, and then proceeded to the post-office to inquire if there were any letters for us. The office was a dark, stuffy little place, and we did not intend to stay in it a moment longer than was necessary. Little did we guess what a long sojourn we were destined to make there. The babu was

a small fat man, aged, rather deaf and blind. He was the personification of the "Regulations." They oozed out of him from every pore; they were written across his face; they shone from his eyes; his fingers twitched them as he spoke. On first acquaintance you would have described him as rather a pathetic sight. He had grown old in the service of the "Regulations." When we knew him better we used many adjectives to describe him—pathetic was not one of them. We told him our names, and asked him if any letters for us had gone through to Jhatri. "No, Sahib," was the answer; "none have gone through." We were just going away when a thought struck me, and I said, "I suppose there are none here, waiting to go through, are there?" After a few minutes' hesitation he said, "Yes, there are three." We at once exclaimed, "Well, why on earth didn't you say so?" and asked him to hand them over. He retorted that it was quite impossible, and for some minutes the only reason we could get was the fact that it was contrary to the "Regulations." Oh those "Regulations"! We could hardly keep our hands off him. We were hot and rather tired, and it was almost impossible to keep one's temper. I should have liked to have seized and shaken him, stamped on him, beaten him, and squashed those "Regulations" out of him. But such behaviour, in these modern days, would bring quick retribution. Visions of being recalled from leave, appearance in the courts, fines, and stoppage of furlough—all floated before one's brain, and we had to be contented with telling him merely a tithe of what we thought of him. We raved and swore, cajoled and entreated, threatened and bribed,—all was useless. He merely stood and blinked at us, twitching his hands, and occasionally cracking his knuckle-joints. His only retort was, "They are addressed to Jhatri, and to Jhatri they must go. You must go to Jhatri to get them, Sahib."

Our route lay in the opposite direction to Jhatri, and we did not intend to accompany those letters for twenty miles along a very uninteresting road, take delivery of them at Jhatri, and then tramp twenty miles back again. We determined to get possession of them somehow. Then an idea came to me. It seemed a solution of the difficulty. I said to our friend, "Supposing I send a telegram to the postmaster at Arnia, whence the letters have been redirected, telling him to wire you to give us our letters here, will you deliver them then?" This made him think for some time. Then he rushed for his prehistoric volume of "Regulations," and consulted it for some minutes. He looked up rather sadly, and said, "I can find nothing about it in the 'Regulations.'" I mentally consigned the "Regulations" elsewhere, but, keeping my temper, asked very politely, "But sup-

posing a telegram to that effect did come, would you hand over the letters?" "I don't know, Sahib," he answered after five minutes' thought; "I am afraid not. I should have to write and get an official letter sanctioning such a breach of the 'Regulations.'" As an answer to his letter would take at least two weeks before it arrived, we seemed no nearer to getting our letters. During the course of the somewhat heated argument that followed, he informed us that our letters were there in a sealed bag on the table, and that they were going on to Jhatri that evening. We pointed out that there was nothing in the world to prevent his opening the bag, taking out our letters, and sealing it up again. Who would be any the wiser? No, it was impossible, as it was contrary to all "Regulations." Then, as by now he had come to the conclusion that our opinion of the "Regulations" was not a high one, he added, "Besides, I am being relieved by a new babu this evening. I have made out receipts and papers, &c., for the contents of that bag, and if I take out three letters all the papers will have to be altered. No, Sahib, it is impossible."

But his mention of a relief coming that evening had given me another idea. When I asked him if he knew anything about the man who was coming to take his place, he said that he knew nothing whatever about him and had never even heard his name. So I said to X that the man we had passed on the road that morning must be the relief. Now early in the day we had passed a very small fat man, wearing spectacles and not much else, who, in answer to our inquiries, said that he was a post-office official on his way to relieve a man who was going on furlough. But I described him very differently to our friend "Regulations." In fact, I gave him a picture of our Pathan orderly, Khan Beg, who was then arranging our baggage up at the rest-house. So, telling X that it was obviously useless trying any more to get our letters, we left the dirty little office, and on our way through the bazaar I told him of my scheme. It was very simple, and short of brute force it really seemed the only way of getting the better of those cursed "Regulations." Khan Beg was to impersonate the new babu and get our letters somehow. We sent for him and explained our troubles, and gave him minute details of what he was to do. We impressed on him that he was not to use force, but was to exercise the full cunning of his brain and get those letters, if possible, without the knowledge of the babu. He was to insist on the contents of the mail-bag being counted, and we were sure that he would find an opportunity of slipping the letters unseen into the ample folds of his garments. We also pointed out to him the necessity for haste, as the real babu might arrive at any moment. Khan

Beg quite appreciated the joke, and gaily started off to rob His Majesty's mail-bag. To assist the deception we sent a coolie with him, carrying one of our servant's tin boxes, without which no native in India who considers himself anybody ever travels. From the verandah of the rest-house we had a clear view down the bazaar street to the post-office door. Having launched Khan Beg on his errand, I began to feel a little nervous as to the result. A Pathan generally makes little distinction between strategy and brute force. I knew quite well that if our friend "Regulations" refused to be taken in, and Khan Beg could not get peaceable access to that letter-bag, he would carry it off by force. I had visions of Khan Beg issuing from the office with the bag under one arm and the babu under the other. This would mean a large expenditure of rupees before peace was restored.

According to Khan Beg's account this is what happened. At first, apparently, the babu never doubted his identity, and was only too eager to begin handing over charge. One would have thought that his suspicions would have been aroused by his relief's anxiety to begin work so soon, but I imagine that his mental equilibrium had been so much upset by his stormy interview with us, and that he was so eager to get rid of that letter-bag, that he could think of nothing else. For these reasons doubtless, and on account of his partial deafness and blindness, Khan Beg's identity was not suspected. When they reached the item, "One letter-bag, sealed, containing twenty letters," Khan Beg insisted on the bag being opened and the contents checked. This seemed to arouse the suspicions of "Regulations," but something in Khan Beg's demeanour must have impressed him, for he broke his precious seal and emptied the contents of the bag on to the table. Our pseudo-babu was quite well enough educated to recognise our letters, and throwing all diplomacy to the winds he picked them up, and without further to-do walked out into the street. "Regulations" then saw at once that he had been hoaxed, and rushed after him. We saw Khan Beg stalking in a slow and stately manner up the street, and the wretched little babu imploring him by every deity he could think of to give him back his letters.

The poor little man, bare-headed and barefooted, was gesticulating wildly, and running in circles round the dignified Pathan. He soon worked himself into such a frenzy of fear and rage that he dared to catch hold of Khan Beg by the arm, as if to stop him. The Pathan, at this, turned round suddenly with such a ferocious look, that the babu, terrified out of his wits, jumped back, tripped over his own feet, and rolled in the ditch. By this

time the whole of the inhabitants had collected in the street. It was impossible to say on whose side their sympathies lay, but probably they were quite indifferent, and merely joined the peculiar procession out of curiosity. When the unfortunate babu came a cropper in the dust, we could only shriek with laughter, though our mirth was tinged with a feeling of anxiety lest Khan Beg had forcibly opened that mail-bag, and we wondered where it was going to end. Khan Beg and the babu arrived before us simultaneously, and the former, with an air of great pride, handed over to us our lawful property. This was too much for "Regulations." He threw himself on the ground, covered himself with more dust, and yelled at the top of his voice. We could make out very little of what he was saying, but the word "Regulations" occurred several times, and we gathered that unless those letters were returned, life would no longer be worth living. He was now in a truly pitiable condition, and we began to feel quite nervous about him. However, X ran indoors and returned with a jug of water, the contents of which somewhat cooled the frantic man. He then began to talk more coherently, and we got out of him the fact that there were two things which were going to send him immediately to his grave. Both were gross breaches of the "Regulations." Firstly, the letters had been delivered in spite of the fact that they were addressed to Jhatri, and secondly—oh, horror of horrors! —they had been issued from his office without the office stamp. The thought of this was too much for him, and he again rolled shrieking on the ground and foamed at the mouth. The cold-water cure was again applied by X, and the poor man was now so exhausted that we persuaded him to keep a little calmer and listen to what we had to say. I held the letters up in front of him, and promised him on my oath that if he would keep calm for ten or twenty minutes, I would give them back to him exactly as they were. He looked doubtful, but seemed inclined to trust me. Under the circumstances no other alternative remained to him. I went indoors, leaving him rocking himself to and fro in the verandah, quietly moaning about his beloved "Regulations." A few minutes with a kettle sufficed to open the envelopes and extract their contents. Having replaced them with bits of newspaper and gumming down the flaps, I went out into the verandah and handed the letters back to the babu. He looked at them for some moments, turning them over and over. After satisfying himself that they really did appear untouched, his face broke out into a broad grin and he started to overwhelm us with blessings. He then remarked that he concluded that we must have opened and read them. We replied that

his conclusion was correct, and with a cunning grin he asked us how we had done it. Doubtless he was a far greater adept at the art than we were, but we thought it wiser to refuse the information. Then he went happily off down to his office, still talking about his "Regulations."

Khan Beg, who was standing near when the letters were returned, was most indignant at our having given up the prize which he had taken so much trouble to obtain, and he practically told us that we were fools to have been taken in by what was nothing more than acting. However, he was pacified when we showed him the letters, and assured him that the babu had gone off with envelopes containing nothing but pieces of newspaper.

That evening the newly-arrived babu came to the rest-house and handed over to us our three letters, saying that as we were at Doraha there was no necessity to send them on to Jhatri.

H. CH. DE CRESPIGNY.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

FRANCE AND BRITAIN—A COMMON FACTOR OF UNHAPPINESS—PRESIDENT WILSON THE VILLAIN OF THE PEACE—THE FRIENDS OF GERMANY—A FRENCHMAN ON FRANCE—THE PRESS.

It is impossible to visit France at this hour without perceiving the profound disquietude of the country. It is not merely that France suffers from the griefs which perplex us also—the high price of life's necessities, the utter selfishness of the working classes and their lack of imagination, the subtle and dangerous domination of the Jew, the desire of the ignorant Socialists to substitute for the Entente a hastily-made friendship with Germany. All these dangers assail the French Republic; and to talk with Frenchmen, to read the French press, is to understand that in France and Britain there is a common factor of unhappiness. But France is deeply troubled by one danger, within which we ourselves do not stand. The war is over, France is victorious, and she has not won the palms of victory. In many ways she is worse off than her defeated opponent. Germany's territory has not been devastated, her factories and fields and orchards have not been destroyed. She may begin her work of reconstruction, unhampered by such losses as she has wantonly and with forethought inflicted upon France. And while so much may be not seldom to her advantage, she refuses to perform her part of the treaty. Here, indeed, are the source and origin of France's uneasiness. The treaty signed at Versailles remains ineffective. Germany laughs aloud at the conditions which she has accepted, and which she intends not to fulfil. Her armies are not disbanded, her arms are not surrendered, the indemnities and reparations, which she promised to provide, are half-forgotten, and in vain France asks for the coal which the Germans undertook to send her. Was, then, the ceremony of Versailles a mere farce? That is what France is asking, and she receives no answer.

It is not surprising, then, that France cherishes a kind of anger against those who are, and will we hope always remain, her allies. The speech of M. Barthou was indeed the result of an intelligible irritation. So far as touches France, Germany is where she was in 1914. Across the Rhine is a nation far more numerous than the French, desirous to take its revenge, and as keenly animated as ever it was to attempt the domination of the world. A German, we are told, when he is drunk, talks of another war in five years. When he is sober he discusses with all his unimaginative earnestness how best he shall evade the

promise to disarm, with what celerity he may build up again an army and a navy which shall astonish Europe. For France the activities of Germany are a real and constant menace. For the people of England they are a faintly remembered dream. And France, which is in the habit of dealing with realities, knows that the best way of weakening Germany is to compel her to carry out the provisions of the peace. She knows also that in this policy she does not obtain the single-minded help which is her due of those who shared with her the toils of war, and to the high hopes which followed the armistice there succeeds something akin to despair.

She sees herself still beset by her hereditary enemy, and asks for the help to which she has a right. And she hears from Mr Asquith, whom she is indiscreet enough to believe a living politician, a benevolent statement that he will do his best to revise the terms of peace in Germany's favour. She hears from the cynical and soulless economists that two years of the bagman's golden age are worth another war—that only if we can once more buy and sell in the markets of Germany nothing else matters. It would, in truth, be difficult to overrate the harm that has been done in France by Mr Keynes' mischievous book. The mere fact that Mr Keynes belittles the damage which the Germans have inflicted upon the fair land of France is sufficient to show that he has a bias in favour of the enemy. The other fact, that his economic pedantry prevents him from seeing what would be the political effect of his argument, deprives his pamphlet of all value. Mr Keynes, being deficient in the historic sense, cares not a jot what happens across the Rhine. Not only would he smooth Germany's path to peace—he would invite her also to turn Russia into a commercial vassal; and if Germany, thus generously holpen, found herself ready in ten years to re-enforce the doctrine of blood and iron, Mr Keynes doubtless would satisfy himself that the gospel of political economy had not been outraged. To be sure, he talks very much as the pedants talked in 1914, who declared that there would be no war because there was no money in it. Perhaps there is not much difference between his outlook and the ineffable Norman Angell's. Both the one and the other are ready to assert that in certain conditions this or that must happen. It never happens as they say, and then they shift their ground, wholly unrepentant of the harm they have done their best to do.

Unhappily the French cannot see Mr Keynes in his just proportion. They know that he was present for a while at the Conference in Paris, and they attach more importance than they need to his argument. Their distrust of Mr George is better founded, because, if Mr Keynes doesn't matter much,

Mr George matters, unhappily, a vast deal. And the French perceive, as we perceive, that the objection to Mr George is not that he has a policy hostile to France, but that he has not a policy at all. If Mr George, in the House of Commons, declares with a great many words that he will support France in all her demands upon Germany, the assurance is of little use. For the French have learned that it is inexpedient to attach much value to Mr George's eloquence, since what he says to-day he will assuredly take back to-morrow. They blame him not so much for his policy as for his lack of policy. And not understanding that Mr George cannot look further ahead than his parliamentary majority, that the grandeur and the honour of England are beyond his grasp, they ascribe to infirmity of purpose what is really the outcome of a dangerous and consistent egoism. But in neither case can the French take comfort in Mr George's verbal assurances. And if Mr George has failed them, what shall they say of President Wilson's defection?

Mr Wilson is, in fact, cast by every Frenchman for the part of the villain of the peace. We do not suppose that the great Idealist is permitted to read what is said of him in the French newspapers. If he were, it would be very good for his soul's health. But he is recognised by the French correctly enough as the first cause of the woes of France. It was he who, with little enough excuse, interfered in the affairs of Europe, which he imperfectly understood, and then left in the lurch all those who had been foolish enough to trust him. The firm alliance which was once destined to unite solidly France with England and the United States is still unknit, owing either to Mr Wilson's bad faith or Mr Wilson's incompetence. And once more France stands alone with a Germany nearly twice as great as herself still on the alert across the Rhine.

If Mr Wilson has forgotten his promises, or has found himself unable to redeem them, he has at least preserved his power of irritation. Of this neither disease nor the activity of his political enemies has availed to deprive him. Though he is not permitted by the Senate of the United States to ratify the peace with Germany, he issues his orders and opinions from the White House as though he were not the President of a democratic State but the Sovereign of the World. He has insolently broken in pieces the League of Nations, which Europe gave him for a plaything, and he has left it to the Allies to put the shattered fragments together as best they may. The politician who laughed at Castlereagh, and Metternich, and Talleyrand, who thanked God that at last "the plain man" had come into his own, has proved himself helpless in act and exasperating in word. His open condemnation of what he was pleased to call "French

militarism" caused, as perhaps it was intended to cause, a vast deal of purposeless irritation. It was, of course, an expression, not of France's character but of Mr Wilson's ignorance. Knowing nothing of France, the man who invented the phrase, "too proud to fight," confuses the necessity of self-defence with a mad Chauvinism. Suppose Mexico, which lies over the border of the United States, were as strong as Germany and as ambitious, would Mr Wilson condemn his own country as "militarist," if it showed a desire to strengthen its frontiers and to be ready to repel the attack of the invader? When, in 1914, Germany made an onslaught upon France, France took up the essential duty, imposed upon every high-spirited and honourable country, of self-defence, not in the spirit of levity or boastfulness, but with all the humility of true courage. She has lost some two millions of men in the fight; she has seen her territory invaded and devastated—in brief, she has borne sacrifices which Mr Wilson and his countrymen have not shared, and which their lack of imagination forbids them to appreciate. There is nothing France wishes less than another war. She complains, justly enough, that the refusal to divide and weaken Germany exposes her still to a risk from which she recoils in horror.

The truth is that Mr Wilson and his countrymen do not understand what the hopes and fears of Europe mean. Because they are far removed from the danger of invasion, they fondly believe that they are the only men in the world who cherish the "ideal" of peace. Instead of boasting, they should give thanks upon their knees that theirs is not the hard destiny of France. Alas! they cannot learn. The battles which they fought in the war have taught them nothing. Not long since an American paper celebrated in its dithyrambic style the pleasure which the "doughboys" felt on returning home. It was not, we are told, the absence in Europe of "bath-tubs" which alone disgusted the gallant warriors of America. That indeed was hard to bear. But that which most bitterly distressed the brave sons of the New World was Europe's love of war! Truly they change not their mind when they come across the sea. They saw a devastated world. They saw France and England mourning for the bravest of their sons, and they talk about Europe's love of war! It would be difficult to match this insensitiveness in all the annals of the world. But at any rate Europe will gladly accept the conclusion at which the writer has no difficulty in arriving. He would hang across America a vast flag bearing the name of Monroe, and leave Europe alone to "love war" by herself. In this exclusiveness America will find that France cordially agrees. But France

rightly enough demands a reciprocal policy of non-intervention. She will assuredly refrain from interfering with the affairs of America. She expects that America, for her part, will refrain as well from dictation as from criticism. After all, the demand of France is not exorbitant. She asks no more than that those who with her put their signatures to the treaty of peace, should aid her loyally in seeing that the provisions of that treaty are justly and exactly carried out. She remembers that after 1871 she held herself bound in honour to perform what she undertook to perform. She asks no less than that of her defeated foe to-day.

And France deserves our sympathy because she is passing through the same crisis of democracy in which we feel ourselves oppressed. In France, as in England, a new and a false value is set upon men and things. There is a complete absence of degree and subordination. Discipline seems to have been left behind in the trenches. The empty head, being numerous, is the head which wins the respect of all politicians who ascribe the exclusive possession of virtue and courage to the unskilled, the untaught, the uncontrolled. A few weeks ago Dr Vaillant, a distinguished surgeon, lost an arm in experimenting with radium. He was ready to sacrifice his life for his country, as were the gallant men who fought upon the field of battle. And as he was a man of great talent—a man upon whose exertions the very existence of a great hospital depended—he received (without argument or complaint) the sum of 4000 francs a year, far less than that which the meanest sweeper of the hospital's corridors demanded not in vain. And the meanest sweeper had the advantage of Dr Vaillant in this: if he fell in the performance of his hazardous duty—if he tripped over a badly-handled broom—he was granted an ample pension. For Dr Vaillant there is no reward save the consciousness of duty performed and something added to the sum of human knowledge.

But it is plain that, where the relative values of services done are thus monstrously confused, there is little hope of true progress or essential justice. The case of Dr Vaillant and the sweeper means that the politicians have set up for themselves in France, as in England, an infamously false standard. It is not that such men as Dr Vaillant complain. They find in the conquest of human knowledge a reward which it is far beyond the power of demagogues to confer. They can afford to smile, even when the idle sweeper boasts himself indispensable to a hospital, which could not exist without the aid of the men of science. An injustice is done to the unskilled labourer, who is persuaded in his folly to believe that he is the keystone in civilisation's arch. Another dose of flattery is administered

to the politician, who in Augier's phrase pursues "the first of the inexact sciences," and who is ready to believe that nothing matters so long as the sweepers, always more numerous than the men of genius, are on his side. Nothing, indeed, can be more dangerous to the health and safety of the State than this cynical alliance between the ignorant voter and his representative. They are easily persuaded to agree that between them they hold the keys of heaven and earth, that upon their alliance depends the future happiness of the human race. It is this absurd faith in the indispensability of the demagogue that has persuaded the members of the French Chamber and the French Senate to begin their task of reconstruction by voting an additional 12,000 francs a year to each one of themselves. M. Léon Daudet did not overstate the case when he declared that by this act of gross selfishness the Chamber had committed suicide. The soldiers, who saved their country in the war, must wait for their pensions. The men who cannot wait are the deputies and the senators, who fight with their tongues, and refuse to carry on this worthless and unnecessary warfare on less than 27,000 francs a year. Nor is it likely that the increased income awarded to the politicians will do anything to stop the corruption, private and public, which is the inevitable curse of a democracy. The French politicians have shown by their avowed egoism at what a price they estimate the service of their country, and no doubt the hour is at hand when our English demagogues will rival in greed their colleagues across the Channel.

France, then, is ill at ease. She asks herself whether the sacrifice of 2,000,000 brave men is worth the poor results which she has attained. She sees the same sort of politicians in power as did their best to lose the war. She remembers that while miscreants, like Malvy, were permitted to prevent the appointment of Castelnau to the high command, the soldiers, even in the field, were not masters of their own craft. What a hubbub there would have been if Castelnau or Foch had dared to dictate to a politician! Yet the politicians on both sides the Channel have never scrupled to interfere with the business of warfare, which they did not and never will understand. These are some of the memories which impair the confidence of France. But beyond the realm of argument there is a vague mysterious misgiving, which is not easily accounted for. As in England, so in France, the working classes do not want to work. They ask daily, hourly, for an increase in wages and a decrease in the hours of labour, more from a vague feeling of unrest than from avarice. The small mob of swindlers and adventurers, which calls itself the proletariat, demands in France, as it demands in Britain, the

goods of others, because they want to get rich quickly at the expense of others. They are animated not by a hatred of the *bourgeoisie*, but by a jealous rage that the *bourgeoisie* does not consist of them and them alone. The vilest of them, such as M. Cachin, proclaim aloud their hatred of France. They are solid, they tell us, with their German comrades; they are the enemies of the French *bourgeois;* they delight to deafen the French patriots with the cry of "Long live Germany! Long live Germany, red, communist, and sovietist!"

Had we not heard the same cry at home we might hesitate to believe that it could be raised by a Frenchman who had watched for four years the sad history of the war. But the ineffable M. Cachin leaves us no room for doubt. He goes beyond the worst of our scoundrels, inspired though they be by the Jews of Russia. "We are revolutionaries"—these are his exact words,—"once more we proclaim aloud: the workers have no fatherland, and we know well that this formula is true. Though we live in Paris, all our thoughts, all our hopes, all our hearts are in Germany—down there, in the basin of the Ruhr, where the German people is fighting for liberty. Above parties, above fatherlands, there is the working class. Wherever a proletariat is fighting for communism there is a brother, and we would rather be the soldiers of a world-wide revolution than the citizens of a democratic republic. We prefer the iron-grey uniforms of the red guards of the Ruhr to the sky-blue of the French Army." Were these things not said and written we should hesitate to believe them possible. The Russian terror has taught the miscreants nothing, and when we remember that the "proletariat" everywhere consists of Jew millionaires, half-baked intellectuals, and their dupes, we recognise how difficult it is to bring about a better state of things. M. Cachin doesn't matter in the long-run—the Jew millionaire passes away with his stolen money-bags, but the dupes remain. From them we cannot withhold a certain pity. They know not what they do or say. They suffer less from malevolence than from a subtly inoculated disease. They are the victims of a suggestion, the more dangerous because the vote has given them a power which they only half comprehend. We asked a highly-cultivated Frenchman, who stands far aloof from political parties, to what he set down the spiritual unrest of his countrymen, and this is what he told us in reply. "Nothing is to be done," said he, "by doles or concessions to satisfy the working classes. They have more money than they want, and less work than they can do with ease and comfort. The one thing they need is a change of heart and mind, and this change cannot be attained without a catastrophe. It took four years of

war and the loss of 2,000,000 lives to send France back upon the road of faith. How great a tragedy will be necessary to show her the path leading to toil and prosperity! And the worst is that the politicians do not want to see a change of mind and heart. They prefer the state of flux in which their constituents are kept by discontent and unrest. The voters, they think, are more easily managed when they are agitated. So the ministers encourage the Socialists, with whom they have a lively sympathy, and allow the Anarchists to utter whatever blasphemies against the State they are cunning enough to invent. Thus the men of sound opinion and sincere patriotism are excluded altogether from the management of affairs, and men of the same type as Mr Lloyd George are able to keep the reins of power in their hands."

Nor is this all that we learned from a critic of French politics. "You must remember," he went on, "that the government, weakly as it discharges its duties, has very great powers. Ever since Napoleon invented a system, which worked well enough when controlled by an autocrat of genius, the Governments of France have insisted upon ordering all things from Paris. From Paris are sent the prefects, who carry into the provinces a complete ignorance of provincial life and a complete subservience to the Government which happens for the moment to be in power. Since the prefects must at all hazards be anti-clerical, it follows that they are very often Jews. At any rate, their sympathies are all with the capital, and they do their best to force a false uniformity upon the great country towns of France. What is happening in Alsace to-day is typical of the system, which never was justified save by the genius of Napoleon. The Alsatians, ardently French as they are, find their affections grow cold when they are asked to obey officials who understand neither their wants nor their character. If the French Government does not take care it may have, instead of a loyal province, another Ireland at its door, simply because it refuses to acknowledge that what we call 'local government' is the first necessity of the provinces, that a policy of 'regionalism,' as it is called in France, alone can restore to the old kingdoms and duchies of France the old life and the old spirit which were once their glory. Even if Napoleon's system were a system of strength, it has become under the Republic a system of weakness, and should be made an end of."

And according to our critic, the prevailing centralisation more than anything else prevents a change of mind and heart in the French people. "If you impose upon all men the same method of life, the same duties, you can keep them more readily faithful to the ballot-box. As the Roman Emperor wished that the people had but one head that

he might cut it off, so the demagogue wishes that the people might have but one opinion, that he may flatter it. And in order that the voters may not win too large a share of independence, the Government takes care that they shall all have precisely the same sort of teaching. From the elementary school to the university all institutions are under the thumb of the Government, which decides what shall be taught, and appoints the teachers. The school teachers of France are Radical Socialists, who prepare the voters for their task of voting. The École Normale is a hot-bed of revolution, and even the Sorbonne has become, under the control of the Government, a school of anarchy. Obviously, if the Government controls the universities and gives professorships as a reward for political service, learning loses its worth and its independence. And the worst of it is, that the Government has created a vicious spider's web, from which the poor fly, the citizen, can never escape. The citizen gets his opinion from the school or the university controlled by the State; he renders his allegiance to the State, which has made him what he is. Where is the possibility of escape? Nowhere, save in a change of régime. And how can this change be brought about? Only by the bloodshed of a reactionary revolution. There is nothing, therefore, to be done. France must remain what she is to-day—the poor victim of a vicious system."

Thus our French critic in his conclusion is frankly and openly a pessimist. In his pessimism we cannot agree. Where a change of régime is possible the passage of the years will show. That a change of régime in France need be bloody we do not believe. The history of the last hundred years is all in favour of a quiet and peaceful revolution. When the Royalists succeeded to Napoleon, they succeeded with a triumphant tranquillity. Neither 1830 nor 1848 caused the gutters of Paris to flow with blood, and the *coup d'état* of the third Napoleon was made with the sacrifice of nothing more than the pride of a few pretentious personages. We do not, therefore, despair of such a change in the Government of France as may restore a vivid life to the provinces, and may save a great country from the dire consequences of a lawless and godless democracy. Meanwhile, we wish that our Government would recognise the harm that has been done in France by the public control of education. The wish, we fear, is vain. The ambition of Messrs George and Fisher is far greater than their care for England. And if they see political profit in subordinating the interests of learning to the exigence of the ballot-box, then learning will stand no chance at all.

Meanwhile there are signs not a few that France understands, more clearly than ever she did, the problems which confront her. Never before

was her press so well informed, and so keen in its defence of the fatherland. There was a time, some twenty years ago, when the French press was a strange mixture of violence and frivolity. Side by side you found every day in adjacent columns a reckless pamphlet and a fine specimen of what was called the *esprit gaulois*. In other words, Henri Rochefort jostled Armand Silvestre, and both tastes were satisfied. The newspapers were not then at the pains to collect news, nor to check the truth of such news as by accident came to their offices. To-day all is changed, and changed, may be, not always for the better. We shall always believe that the *Journal* of a quarter of a century ago, which had no other purpose than to amuse, was the best paper of its kind that ever smiled gaily upon the world. It did not add to our information; it did not trouble to instruct the public opinion of France. It raised a laugh, and those who read it passed on all the better, let us hope, for the jest. The journals of this year, 1920, are serious. It is not for them to smile and to joke. The situation is too grave for frivolity. They prefer to preach, and it must be allowed that they preach with sound knowledge and a good purpose. They do not make the same ridiculous mistakes which once disgraced them. No French newspaper will declare again, as the *Figaro* once declared, that the late Lord Salisbury owed his skill in policy to the fact that he was the son of Lord Beaconsfield. Never again shall we be told that England had made an attack upon a group of islands called the Minquièrs, the most of which are submerged at high tide. No editor would hold his place for a week who had not a clear appreciation of what was happening in England and Germany and America. The tact and discretion with which the late crisis was handled by the press of Paris is the best proof of the new spirit which is now guiding the country. The insolence of Mr George, the tone, as of an usher, adopted by Lord Curzon, would have justified a quick irritation, if not an outburst of anger. Not a word was said which could have hurt the feelings of England, which, after all, deserved no lenient treatment; not a word was written which did not tend to appeasement.

Here, then, is a hopeful sign if not for the wit, at least for the good understanding of the future. And while we render justice to the republican press of France, let us not forget the admirable work which is done to-day by *L'Action Française*, the journal of the Royalists. Never was there a better combination in the conduct of a newspaper than MM. Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet. M. Daudet is a pamphleteer of a candid and fearless mind. If we would find his parallel in England we must compare him with Mr Leo Maxse. The two men are inspired equally with a love of their country. Neither cedes to the other in courage

and honesty. Both suffer from the defect of their quality—a kind of insistent fanaticism, which sometimes weakens their case. What the mandarins are to Mr Maxse, Caillaux is to M. Léon Daudet. And it must be admitted that M. Daudet pursues the more dangerous quarry. M. Maurras is made of other stuff, as M. Daudet would be the first to acknowledge. He is a political philosopher whose serious teaching will never be forgotten. He has a firm faith in the doctrine of tradition, and all that it means for the ancient race of France. He sees clearly that the hope of his country lies in a policy of decentralisation, in the undoing of the harm which the system of Napoleon did to France. And as his opinions are always the opinions of a *bien-pensant*, his expression of them is the work of an artist. He is a born man of letters, and had he not felt that his duty lay upon the side of politics, he would have pursued his art in singleness of mind unto the end. But France was in need, and she called to him not in vain. The history of literature does not show many sacrifices, complete and ungrudging, as was the sacrifice of M. Maurras. The very fact of the sacrifice adds weight to every word that M. Maurras writes. We wish only that the Prince whom he would put upon the throne were the more worthy his regard. We in England have the misfortune to know a side of the Duc d'Orléans' character which has escaped the vigilance of M. Maurras. However, he is a Legitimist, and must needs support the Prince whom history has set before him. And let it be remembered that the principles of M. Maurras are not endangered by the failure or success of the French monarchy. *L'Action Française* fights the battle of France without regard to the political parties, which are the curse of the country; and even if it did not profess aloud the monarchical principle, it would still fight with courage and pertinacity the battle of patriotism. And it is in the career of MM. Maurras and Daudet, and not in the greedy egoism of the Chamber, that the best hope of France lies.

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